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1. Fiction Narrative



Carrie F. Tarbox,



HELEN LEESON:

A Peep at New York Society.

Rebel not against the mysterious decrees of Providence: from their darkness may burst forth the light of love and happiness.

PHILADELPHIA:
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TO

MRS. E. C. T********.

THESE PAGES

ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED,

BY

THE AUTHOR.



PREFACE.

GENTLE READER:—It is not without emotion—nay, fear—that we offer you this first emanation of our pen, particularly as the subject we have selected is one most difficult to treat, in consequence of its having been so often delineated.

Many have pointed out and criticised the errors of our society, but, too frequently, with that tinge of bitter sarcasm which renders all censure unproductive of a beneficial result. We have adopted a different plan; and, in reluctantly raising the vail which conceals the weaknesses of our fashionables, we have endeavoured to display those brilliant tints of refinement and elegance, of true kindness and noble devotion, which lend so pure a light to the picture.

Our only motive in thus exposing to the public gaze the smiles and frowns of our home-circles, has been a feeling of love and charity—an earnest desire to promote that

improvement which would secure for future generations happiness and stability, and spare them the aching trials which modern extravagance must necessarily bring in its train. The attempt may be termed presumptuous—the result a failure. Be it so. We will bear your criticism in meek humility, satisfied with the blessed hope of having contributed our mite toward that great work of regeneration to which all the energies of the human mind should ever tend.

HELEN LEESON:

A PEEP AT NEW YORK SOCIETY.

CHAPTER I.

NINE o'clock was striking in one of our fashionable mansions in Fourteenth Street, on the 10th of December, 18—.

"It is late, Anna," said Mrs. Leeson to her youngest daughter, who sat absorbed in the book she was reading. "Helen must be ready by this time. Run up, my darling, and see."

Obedient to the maternal injunction, the young girl rose, but run she could not, for she was lame; and as the eye of the mother followed the tottering step, a sigh burst from her lips.

Mrs. Leeson was a woman of forty: she had evidently been handsome; but the pressure of grief, more than years, had furrowed her brow at an early period, and her countenance betrayed an expression of sadness which seldom left it.

Still, there was nothing stern in that melancholy look. A kindness of heart, which was reflected in her benignant eye, was the predominant feature in Mrs. Leeson's disposition, and by all who approached her she was beloved and respected.

Of the causes which produced that careworn expression

we will speak hereafter. Let us first introduce to our readers the other members of the family circle who met around that blazing Liverpool fire. Near Mrs. Leeson, who was knitting by a large round table, sat a middle-aged lady, her sister, Miss Seraphina Marsy, one of the brightest exceptions to that erroneously established rule of cross old maids. In appearance, Miss Marsy did not in the least resemble her celestial namesake; in fact, she could be called *homely;* and her deficiency in feminine graces was made the more vivid from their strange and incongruous association with her name. No doubt, some seraphic vision had induced Mrs. Marsy to give her child this appellation, which, had she not been gifted with unusual good sense and intellectual resources, would have proved a positive annoyance. Miss Seraphina, or rather Aunt Seraph, as our love of her many virtues will soon induce us to call her, was a clever, (English clever,) intelligent woman, whose whole life had been filled with deeds of benevolence; not of that mere metallic charity which relieves the wants of the body, but of that true milk of human kindness which feels and finds the way to the suffering soul, and provides a substantial nourishment for spiritual as well as temporal cravings.

Her life of single blessedness, which had been entirely optional, afforded her many valuable moments of leisure, which she devoted to study. She loved literature and music. The fine arts were her favourite topics. She had written many pages of eloquent sentiment, addressed to that mysterious void which to all poetical minds is so full of animation. Upon rare occasions, these productions of Aunt Seraph's pure spirit were brought to light—but seldom, very seldom; for of all horrors, that of being styled a blue-stocking was what her modest shrinking nature most dreaded.

Sad it is, that one should be compelled to turn from the pencilling of these delicate features of feminine character, to take a look at the darker traits of our fallen humanity!

On the other side of the table sat Mr. Leeson: Robert Leeson, Esq.—the owner of that splendid establishment; and its gorgeous magnificence scarcely superb enough to satisfy the desires of that pride which betrayed itself in every feature of his countenance, leaving in its train the inevitable stamp of care and unquenchable ambition.

Mr. Leeson was reading the newspaper, but seemed evidently annoyed, for frequent expressions of irritation disturbed the whispered confab of the two ladies.

"Nine o'clock! what can those girls be about? Does Helen know I must be at the club at ten?"

"Yes, my dear; but to-night is Amanda's ball, and you would certainly be displeased if Helen was not suitably dressed."

"Of course," responded the impatient father. "But surely two hours should be sufficient for the most elaborate toilet. I'll smoke my cigar for awhile, and then I'll be off." So saying, Mr. Leeson walked into the dining-room, making sundry ungracious remarks, until he closed the folding door upon his ill humour.

"Ah!" sighed the humble wife. "I never could understand these bursts of irritation, so galling to others, so exhausting to one's self. Is Laura up stairs, sister?"

"She came in with me, and I think I heard Alice Irving's voice; her laugh, you know, is not to be mistaken."

"Yes, it is so musical. What a merry creature she is! I wish she could impart some of her joyous spirits to our poor Laura, who is more sad than usual. Is she ill?"

"No. She has, you know, always been delicate. I am in constant dread of her being like her poor mother. I

think, however, that her present state of depression can be accounted for. Yesterday was the anniversary of Arthur's death, and Laura has been wretched: even little Arty, generally so bright, seemed influenced by that atmosphere of gloom. Oh! sister, how bitterly have I regretted my darling's marriage with Count Marini, excellent, perfect as the poor fellow was!"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Leeson, "but who could have foreseen the melancholy accident which terminated his life? Laura was so happy; hers seemed so bright a future! How little can we depend upon the securities of this sad world!"

"Why can we not take a more philosophical view of its trials?" said Miss Marsy. "Why allow the links of humanity to be so strong, so binding? Laura mourns for her husband to-day as she did two years ago; and still, hers is a spirit full of meek humility—so angelic, so truly religious! Her grief distresses me, but is not a subject of astonishment. I feel that were death to tear the precious child from my love, *I* never would cease to mourn for her! There is a ring at the bell! Do you expect any one, sister?"

"No one, except Herman Smith, who probably wishes to see Helen's brilliant toilet."

Mrs. Leeson was not mistaken. A few minutes after, Jackson (the coloured waiter) opened the door, and ushered in a young man, who made his entrance as though the premises were most familiar to him.

"Good evening, ladies; I am not too late, I hope. Has Miss Helen gone to Mrs. Grantly's?"

"No, not yet," said Mrs. Leeson. "How are you, Herman? and where have you been these few days past? I expected you to dinner, on Thursday."

"Why, dear madam, Mr. Leeson must have told you that we had extra business to attend to at the counting-house; and for the last two days I have been up in Connecticut. Mother and Julia are in fine spirits, and I brought you some of the productions of the farm, which I sent up this afternoon by Thompson."

"Most delightful presents—particularly at Christmas-time!" said Aunt Seraph. "But how is it, Herman, that you are not to grace Grantly Hall with your presence this evening?"

"Too old for parties, dear lady. When a man is twenty-eight, in New York, he is cut out for an old bachelor, and consequently ceases to be noticed by the belles. That would be most humiliating to the unextinguished embers of my vanity."

"Well," said Mrs. Leeson, "I am really sorry you are not going, for I cannot bear the idea of allowing Helen to drive to her aunt's, and home again, alone. This winter, my health has been so bad, that I have been obliged to give up going out with her, and Mr. Leeson will not consent to accompany his daughter; even to-night he refused to go to Amanda's. I know she will be mortally offended. She depended upon him to entertain Lord Devere, who is travelling in this country with his nephew, Sir Archibald Courtnay, the great speck—the object of universal admiration among the New York belles."

"Ah!" said Herman Smith: "Mrs. Grantly must be delighted. A real lord—two real lords! Stupendous! How many nets will be set, to-night, for the young nobleman! He will be lucky if he is not entrapped before twelve o'clock. I am almost sorry I did not make up my mind to go; I should have enjoyed watching the manœuverings of the Elvingtons, the Coverleys; and as

for Miss Cora Dalton, *she* will require no auxiliary, I am sure."

"Silly people!" said Miss Seraphina.

At that moment, Mr. Leeson reappeared at the door of the dining-room.

"Not down yet? Confound those girls. I'll be bound they are playing up there. Ah! Herman, is that you? What news? Steamer in yet?"

"No, sir," responded the young man, calmly, and apparently not noticing the gruff intonation of his employer; "but very probably she may be up to-morrow. Robert is coming home by the Pacific, Mrs. Leeson, is he not?"

"I hope so," was the mother's smiling reply. "Dear boy! How delighted I shall be to see him! I am only afraid he will be discontented here, after spending six months in Paris."

"Why so?" said Mr. Leeson, tormenting the fire, as he could not worry any one. "The fellow will have to turn over a new leaf when he gets home, and work hard. He has never earned a farthing for himself, and is not worth his salt."

"You are severe, my dear. Robert is young and thoughtless, perhaps extravagant; but a nobler heart than his never beat in any man's breast."

"No, indeed!" echoed Aunt Seraph.

"Well, well, that is all very fine; but he must go to work; that's positive. Ah! here are those girls at last."

Herman rose and opened the door to admit the merry party, which was preceded by many boisterous exclamations.

"Oh! mamma!" said Anna, "you never saw Helen look so well in your life! Sophie has dressed her hair so exquisitely!"

Before Anna could finish her encomiums, the object of them made her appearance in the parlour, followed by Laura Marini, Alice Irving, and Sophie, the French maid, bearing her young mistress's evening cloak of white satin, trimmed with ermine.

Our readers will, no doubt, be anxious to take a glimpse of our heroine, as she there stands, on her first introduction to them.

Helen Leeson was eighteen, and fair as the loveliest of Eve's daughters. Nothing could be more beautiful than her chiselled features, her small mouth and delicate nose, her large black eyes and dark hair. Though naturally rather pale, her complexion, when heightened by excitement, was exquisitely pink; and still that lovely countenance was not faultless. At times there was a haughty expression in Helen's face, which robbed it of much feminine grace. But as she stood that evening, attired in a dress of white tulle, embroidered in gold, her fair brow crowned with a wreath of golden grapes, she was surpassingly lovely, and an exclamation of admiration welcomed her entrance into the parlour. Even the proud father seemed perfectly satisfied. He looked upon Helen as the brightest jewel of his casket of worldly treasures. All his dreams of ambition rested upon the fate of his favourite, his beautiful child. *She* was to marry the wealthiest of the land; *she* was to take the lead in society. In short, *she* was the exquisite personification of his pride; for in that respect Helen's nature resembled her father's.

"Good evening, Mrs. Leeson. Aunt Seraph, how are you? Ah! Mr. Leeson, you still here? the club deprived of your presence?" said Alice Irving; and as she curtsied low to Herman Smith, she added—"What do you think of our belle of the season?"

"Perfectly bewitching."

"I never saw you so becomingly dressed, Elly," said Miss Marsy. "Shall we call you Minerva? I should say, Ceres, if those grapes were wheat."

"Neither title suits me, aunt. I have no such pretension, I assure you; and I am entirely indebted to these ladies for my elegance. Without their assistance, I never could have arranged all these gold ornaments. Laura is a capital dressing-maid."

The young countess had taken an arm-chair near her aunt, and seemed absorbed in thoughts far distant from balls and toilets.

"Why are you not dressed for the party, Miss Alice?" asked Herman Smith.

"For the very best of all reasons, my dear sir. I am not expected; that is, not invited. Don't you know Mrs. Grantly never extends her circle beyond the elite of New York fashion? I certainly can lay no claim to so elevated a station. Do you think that little Alice Irving could pretend to breathe the same atmosphere as Lord Devere and Sir Archibald Courtnay? No, no; impossible! Now, Mr. Leeson, why do you frown? You know I don't mind your frowns," added Miss Irving, laughing.

This was true. Alice and Herman were the only persons in that intimate circle upon whom those frowns produced no effect. Helen did not fear her father, but she was generally annoyed by any thing which seemed to trouble him.

"Now I am going," said Mr. Leeson. "Good-night, Miss Alice; you and I will quarrel, one of these days."

"I think not. I am thy best friend, Neighbour Leeson, as Aunt Martha always says. Only think of my belonging

to a Quaker family, Mr. Herman, and so worldly in my tastes!" added the cheerful girl.

"Helen, mind you do not stay too late, to-night," said Mrs. Leeson. "Tell Mathew to be very careful with his horses; and don't forget to apologize for your father's absence. I am afraid we shall receive a lecture on the subject. There! I hear the carriage. Put your cloak on, darling; let Sophie wrap you up well. It is bitter cold, to-night."

"Shall I take you and Laura home, Aunt Seraph?" inquired Helen.

"Well, yes, dear child," answered Miss Marsy, as she looked at Laura, who seemed fatigued.

"Let me see you in next door, Miss Alice," said Herman.

"Thank you; yes, if you have no other engagement. Good-night, Mrs. Leeson. Helen, remember, you are limited to three conquests, this evening. Sir Archibald counts for two."

"Do you not feel well, darling?" asked Mrs. Leeson, as she kissed Laura.

"Yes; well physically, but sick at heart, aunt." Whispered the young countess, "I shall be better to-morrow, and Arty is coming to show you his new coat. Come, Aunt Seraph, Helen is quite ready. Good-night, Herman; don't run away with Alice."

"No danger," said Miss Irving, as she tripped down the steps; "it is too cold."

All had retired except Mrs. Leeson and Anna, who, as she re-entered the parlour, sat down to the piano and began to sing a soft, sweet melody—one of Schubert's. The mother listened attentively to the sounds of the dear afflicted one, whose whole soul seemed wrapt in the music. When it was over, Anna turned toward Mrs. Leeson—she

was in tears. The young girl ran to her, and throwing her arms around her neck, she said—"Dearest, why, why do you weep? Was it my singing that brought those tears? Mother, you always grieve about me; and you are wrong, for I am happy—very happy. Mine are the joys unknown to those who possess worldly advantages. I would not exchange my lot for the most brilliant—I would not, indeed."

"If so, I am satisfied, my darling," said the fond mother, as she folded the young girl to her bosom.

How pure the sacred link of love between the parent and the child!

"Tell Sophie to wait for Helen, Anna," said Mrs. Leeson, as they parted for the night.

CHAPTER II.

It is scarcely needful to describe the appearance of our aristocratic mansions, when thrown open for the reception of fashion. The unreasonable amount of magnificence, the ridiculous expenditure considered essential for the entertainment of the guests, so much food for pride and cause for subsequent regret,—all this, to the rational members of the community, has long since been considered a calamity which imperceptibly brings on more than one great crisis, shaking the very foundations of New York society. Like the billows of the ocean, which raise its bubbling foam upon the swelling wave and then bury it in the depths of the sea, fortune, that capricious agent ever ready to grasp at the strongest passions of men, will bear the prosperous family to the pinnacle of wealth and social influence, and one year will suffice to precipitate it into ruin and neglect. Thus it has been for many years, and thus, alas! will the unwise members of our society continue to risk the future prospects, nay, existence, of their families upon the frail bark of human pride, and that still more degrading weakness, human vanity.

This seems a strange preliminary to the description of a gorgeous festival, *the* most magnificent of the season; and perhaps, in this circumstance, our severe criticism may appear gratuitous; for the host, Horace Grantly, Esq., was one of the wealthiest of the upper ten, and having no children, was certainly justifiable, some would add, praiseworthy, in expending so much money and care for the gratification

of his friends. Sadly disappointed would some of these have been, however, if they had known how very reluctant Horace Grantly was to submit to the immense exertion thus entailed upon him. He was one of a quiet, retiring nature. Forty years of his life had been spent in a counting-house, all his thoughts absorbed by that restless desire of wealth which has exhausted so much mental power at the expense of health, happiness, and alas!—that more vital object—salvation! Mr. Grantly, by persevering energy, had raised the golden pedestal upon which he now stood, almost an unconscious spectator of the splendour which surrounded him; and many were the moments when he would gladly have exchanged the unsatisfactory enjoyment of his thousands for his quiet and modest home of former days.

Not so with Mrs. Amanda Grantly, his ambitious wife. She was the sister of Robert Leeson, his own flesh and blood; and, moreover, as much like him in nature and character, as two of the Creator's works could be. Mrs. Grantly had been, and would still fain be, a handsome woman; and often, during the period of her constrained obscurity, she bitterly mourned at the thought of her charms being destined to "bloom unseen."

It was a glorious day for Helen's aunt, that upon which she left her simple, unpretending residence in White Street, for the splendid establishment she reigned over at the time our story begins. She had then occupied it for five years, during which she gradually assumed a position in society which was well calculated to gratify the pride of her whole race. We have wronged this lady, however, by comparing her to her brother in every respect. She had conquered, at least with the world, that irritation of temper which had been such a thorn in poor Mrs. Leeson's heart for twenty years; and, in fact, was universally considered a most amiable

and refined lady. Horace Grantly was the only one not entirely convinced of the fact, although he frequently endeavoured to believe that his wife really was what others supposed her to be.

Mrs. Grantly's heart, which had never expanded to the cry of maternal love, was supremely inaccessible to the weaknesses of her sex. She was above those trifling emotions which ever re-echo the sufferings of a fellow-being. Her charities were considerable, no doubt; but where was the sympathizing look of pity which to the aching soul is so precious? Where was the word of comfort which to the sufferer is so musical? These the proud woman could not understand. Her life was one continual whirl of excitement and pleasure; her thoughts, her time, her very existence, were laid at the shrine of pride and fashion. And was she happy? Many of our readers can answer that question. We scarcely believe, however, that she could have been as truly satisfied with her lot as poor little Anna Leeson.

Mrs. Grantly, however, had one great interest in life. This was, to marry her nieces, Helen Leeson and Emma Grantly, according to her ambitious views; and it was principally to promote this desired result that she had issued invitations to her large circle for a fête given to Lord Devere and Sir Archibald Courtnay, his nephew, who, she flattered herself, could not possibly resist the magnificence of her reception, and the many charms of her beautiful niece. To tell the truth, Mrs. Grantly founded all her hopes upon Helen's powers of fascination; for Emma's were by no means equal to the task.

Miss Grantly, the only child of Mr. Henry Grantly, was a fine, intellectual girl, whose education had been directed by the ever-watchful eye of a tender and accomplished

mother. She was not pretty, but her manners were so elegant, her conversation so interesting, that she was a general favourite among her many friends, and always noticed by the sensible habitués of her aunt's soirées. Mrs. Grantly was too loving a mother to be ambitious of mere worldly advantages for her daughter; and in fact, all her attempts had been to screen Emma from the foolish adulation which her wealth and position in society exposed her to.

Many were the efforts which Mrs. Amanda made upon that grand occasion to render her ball *the* fête of the season, and to cast a cloud of gold-dust in the eyes of the young English nobleman. The idea of consulting either of her sisters-in-law upon this momentous question, never occurred to this queen of fashion; but Helen spent two mornings with her aunt, and suggested many little original arrangements, which proved very effective.

Let it not be supposed that our heroine, although carried away by the influence of her father and aunt, was entirely *one of them* in feelings and character. We have acknowledged with regret that she possessed more than a rational share of ungodly pride; but hers was a noble and bright nature, full of charity and love, when that sensitive and morbid trait of her moral self was not in play. She had inherited her father's energy and firmness, but these were tempered by the benignant and soothing influence of her mother and Aunt Seraph. There is an old French saying —"Qui se ressemble s'assemble;" less elegantly translated into English by our proverb—"Birds of a feather flock together," and an excellent test of character. In Helen's case it was quite perceptible. All the friends of her childhood and youth, were such as one would meet with infinite satisfaction through life, and their affection and examples

had raised a protecting screen around the young girl's heart, keeping off the evil which might have resulted from her aunt's partiality, and her constant intercourse with the worldly set which surrounded her.

It was therefore with a beating heart, but very little vanity, that Helen Leeson caught a glimpse of her beautiful self, as she entered Mrs. Grantly's drawing-room that evening. A few of the favoured intimates had been requested to come early, that they might pass an opinion upon the arrangement of the reception-rooms, four of which were gorgeously furnished and splendidly illuminated. A fifth one, adjoining the conservatory, had been selected as a boudoir, where a most becoming twilight, (produced by pink transparencies,) and the perfume of the flowers, rendered it a most enchanting place of repose after the eye had been satiated by the brilliancy of the ball-rooms. Upon this little retreat Mrs. Grantly founded her most sanguine hopes. Helen must contrive, or rather *she* must,—for she knew her niece too well to dream of suggesting a manœuvre which might be considered, to say the least, a breach of feminine delicacy,—she must therefore manage to bring Sir Archibald and his fair partner, Miss Leeson, into this little boudoir, and then trust to Cupid, upon whom she had seldom called on her own account, and who could not disdain so glorious a prize. This the fine lady thought over as she was receiving her guests, who poured out their volleys of admiration, and dispersed through the splendid apartments, many with smiling countenances and heavy hearts, many with ambitious desires, and many, fortunately for our poor humanity, with the only wish of taking an immediate start by the exhilarating music of twenty Kammerers.

"Ah! Emma, is that you?" said Helen, as she passed through the now increasing crowd to take her stand in the

dancing-room. "How sweetly you look! Those blue-bells are so becoming! Is your mother here?"

"Yes; and when you have a spare moment, Elly, stop to say a few words to her," was the reply.

"Miss Grantly is a lovely girl," remarked Helen's partner.

"She is a gem!—so talented, so intelligent, and unassuming! I wish I were like her! Have you seen Mrs. Seyton, to-night, Mr. Marvell?"

"Yes; she came in as we were leaving the reception room, so exquisitely dressed in pink tulle! Our ladies have acquired a true Parisian taste, of late."

The dancing interrupted the conversation, and a bevy of fair ladies, led by the elite of the beaux, whirled around the room, leaving a very small space for those who were doomed to look on and dream of by-gone triumphs. An occasional inclination of the head, or a hurried "good-evening," were the only privileges allowed to the ex-votaries of Terpsichore.

"Good-evening, my lord! Sir Archibald, I am most happy to see you!" was the gracious welcome which Mrs. Grantly offered her illustrious guests; after which she proceeded to introduce them to the few select among her intimates: "Mrs. Coverley, Lord Devere; Miss Olivia Coverley, Sir Archibald; Miss Elvington; Miss Cora Dalton, one of our greatest belles! But where is Helen? Sir Archibald, if you will lend me your arm, I will be your guide through this labyrinth of beauty! Ah! Helen, my dear, let me introduce Sir Archibald to you—my niece, Miss Leeson. I told this lady that, being a stranger, you deserved particular regard, and that you were entitled to the third polka, which is just beginning!"

Sir Archibald, somewhat stunned by this emphatic wel-

come, and being rather awkward and timid, was glad to escape from Mrs. Grantly's grasp; and with a trifling remark upon the charms of the ladies, and his satisfaction at making Miss Leeson's acquaintance, to which she responded in the same strain, he carried off the beautiful girl, and for a few minutes both were lost in the fascination of the music and dancing.

Strange custom, which propriety sanctions, however—that of throwing one's self in a man's arms after an acquaintance of five minutes!

"Ah! Marvell, is that you?" exclaimed a gentleman of remarkably genteel appearance, as he actually stumbled upon Harry Marvell, the beau authority in Mrs. Grantly's circle. "Do come to my assistance! I am a perfect stranger here, and actually have not yet been introduced to the host. Our European notions of propriety cannot tolerate one's spending a whole evening in a man's house, partaking of his hospitality and good cheer, without this slight testimony of regard!"

"Well, my dear fellow, you can be easily gratified, and no doubt will be repaid for the exertion! Mr. Grantly, allow me to introduce my friend Mr. Eric Mac Tavish to you," added the gentleman of fashion.

"Most happy, sir, to make your acquaintance," said the host. "I am just about gathering up a whist party, which, of course, I cannot expect you to join. Pray, Marvell, introduce Mr. Mac Tavish to some of the ladies!" So saying, Mr. Grantly hurried off, as though some imperative duty was to be accomplished.

"Now, you are entirely at liberty to promenade about these saloons, play the agreeable, and flirt to your heart's content! Make yourself perfectly at home," said Marvell.

"Well, can't you introduce me to some sensible woman?

I don't dance, and, by George! it is poor fun to be looking on all the time!"

"Of course!" responded Harry. "See! over there on that divan is an exquisite young widow, Mrs. Seyton. Shall she be the object of your attentions? or will you bestow them on that queen of hearts there, standing near the mantel-piece—Miss Julia Elvington?"

"You may find me fastidious, but neither of these bright planets will have me as a satellite!" said Mac Tavish, laughing.

"To whom, then, will you be introduced? Upon my word, you foreigners are high fellows! If Mrs. Seyton or Miss Elvington could dream of your indifference, you would stand a poor chance of seeing much of New York gayety this season!" added Harry Marvell.

Just then, Mrs. Seyton, who had watched the contest, came toward them, leaning on Lord Devere's arm. Mac Tavish made his escape, determined to trust to chance for his amusement that evening.

The rooms were then so crowded that it was difficult to circulate. Mrs. Grantly was in all her glory. Helen had evidently captivated Sir Archibald. He had scarcely left her. "Now," thought the lady, "is the proper time." Addressing a gracious remark to one guest, finding a seat for another, receiving congratulations from all, Mrs. Amanda passed through the brilliant crowd in search of Helen.

"Here you are, dear! Have you shown Sir Archibald the boudoir? I am sure it will strike his fancy. Ah! Mr. Morris, will you be kind enough to give me your arm, that I may reach the conservatory?" Helen and her partner followed, both unconscious of the snare.

"This is indeed beautiful!" said the young baronet, as

he entered the little retreat. "One might spend an hour, here, very agreeably!"

"You must be tired," added Mrs. Grantly; "let us take a seat on these Oriental cushions—quite a new style of furniture! Helen, your dress in this light makes you look very much like an odalisque!"

"Yes," said Sir Archibald, "I was complimenting Miss Leeson upon the peculiarly elegant style of her coiffure. Really, the American ladies have excellent taste!"

"All our fashions come from Paris," said the hostess. "By-the-by, Mr. Morris, you are an amateur of plants; I would like to show you a camelia of great beauty." So saying, Mrs. Grantly rose and entered the conservatory, followed by her young escort, who would have given all the camelias in the world to return to the dancing-room.

The manœuvring lady had badly managed her cards. She had probably forgotten that the prize she was so eager to seize was an Englishman of twenty-three, and far from being skilled in the art of flirtation, which is innate with our young gentlemen.

Helen felt that she was making a conquest, and the very security rendered her less quick than usual to take advantage of the favourable opportunity. The consequence was, that after a few minutes of silence, during which the young nobleman sighed and looked up at the embroidered curtains, Helen rose and was preparing to return to the drawing-room, when she caught a glimpse of Emma Grantly and Mac Tavish, whom luck had favoured at last.

"I have promised this gentleman to shew him all the beauties of a New York palace!" said Emma, smiling, as she came in.

"Ah! speak not of the splendour of the ball-room, and its glittering display of gold and diamonds; this far sur-

passes them in my estimation! Sir Archibald, good evening."

"Let me introduce you to Miss Leeson, my aunt's niece, and still not my cousin, but my best friend!" added Emma. "Helen, Mr. Mac Tavish. This gentleman has been telling me all about his travels in Europe and Asia. I long to visit all those sacred spots, hallowed by the ruins of antique splendour! What a pleasant time we would have, Helen, if we could go there together, and take Laura and Alice Irving!"

"Delightful!" said Helen; and once more she reclined on the Oriental cushions, quite interested in a conversation in which her youthful admirer took very little part; for all *his* experience of travels had been acquired during his voyage across the Atlantic, and having scarcely left his stateroom, the impression upon his mind was slightly favourable. However, he was an attentive auditor to the glowing descriptions given by the eloquent Scotchman, and eagerly responded to by the fair listeners.

Great was the disappointment of the hostess, when she re-entered the boudoir, shortly afterward, and found it thus occupied. But Mrs. Grantly was not one to allow any annoyance to betray itself upon her countenance. She therefore said, in the most smiling manner—"Supper has been announced, ladies; show these gentlemen that pretty little path through the conservatory to the dining-room."

Mac Tavish, having presented his devoirs to the host and hostess, felt perfectly justifiable in appreciating the many delicacies which were crowded upon that brilliant supper-table. Here, again, several salutary remarks might be made about useless extravagance, waste, &c.; but one feels little inclined to be satirical at supper-time. So thought the many chatty and winking couples who walked in from the

dancing-room, almost exhausted by the violent exercise which the present style of dancing requires, but quite ready, when restored by a slice of *paté* or a plate of oysters, to start again for the German cotillion. Excess—excess—in every thing! *There* lies the error, and *there* lies the great destroyer of American beauty!

Sir Archibald did not dance the German cotillion, but expressed a great desire to see Miss Leeson take a part in it. Helen therefore accepted Sydney Morris as a partner—a favour he was certainly entitled to, considering his devotion in the boudoir manœuvre.

"Do you go to the Elvington's, to-morrow, Miss Helen?" asked her youthful beau.

"Certainly!—and on Thursday to Mrs. Coverly's. Next Monday we are to have a dinner-party, given to Sir Archibald by Cora Dalton. You know her uncle doats upon her, and being very fond of dissipation, she makes the poor old gentleman keep pretty late hours. How ridiculous! Why does she not go out with a friend, or alone, where she is intimate? I should be above such dependence," said Helen.

"Of course!" added Mr. Morris. "I caught a glimpse of old Dalton just now, asleep on the cushions of the boudoir."

Alas for Mrs. Grantly's dreams!

All this time the cotillion was going on, the ladies worn out, exhausted, and looking the worse for their violent exertions. Dame Vanity surely does not keep such late hours, or she would not allow her votaries to make such an active display of their wearied charms. No girl, however pretty and exquisitely dressed, ever looks well at three o'clock. Nature has said—"Thus far shalt thou go and no farther;" and as for the mammas, they are the picture

of fatigue and exhaustion, trying their best to keep their eyes open, saying a word here and there, for fear they might become a terrible counterpart to the poor old gentleman who sleeps unnoticed and forgotten on the Oriental cushions. The minute needle was fast moving from half-past two to three, when Helen looked at the clock, and remembering her promise, "not to stay *too* late," she said—

"Mr. Morris, I would like to take French leave. Can you not order the carriage around for me, while I go up for my cloak?"

Sydney pleaded for a few minutes longer, but in vain; and as Helen escaped through the conservatory, she heard her aunt's voice tuned to its sweetest accents—

"Yes, my lord, I am truly sorry that a serious indisposition has deprived my brother, Mr. Leeson, of meeting you here this evening. I trust he will be well enough to join us on Monday next. You know I expect you and Sir Archibald to dinner?"

"I shall be most happy, madam, to avail myself of your kind invitation," responded his lordship.

Helen heard no more; but what a joyful sensation filled her heart as she repeated to herself, "Lady Helen Courtney's carriage!"

Vanity! Pride! Ambition! wretched seducers of our better judgment; how powerful ye are!

CHAPTER III.

"SHALL I not take you home, Miss Helen?" said Sydney Morris, as he escorted her to the carriage.

"Oh! no; ridiculous! Why Matthew has been driving me since I was born; and although once or twice, I have known him to be fond of *le bon vin*, I would trust myself with him to the world's end." So saying, Helen shook hands with her ex-partner, and stepped into the carriage, which drove off immediately.

Mrs. Grantly's mansion was situated in the Fifth Avenue, a short distance from the Reservoir; and Helen knew that full twenty minutes of meditation would be hers before she reached home. Enchanted by the exhilarating success of the evening, her mind filled with glowing dreams of ambition—we cannot say love—she closed her eyes and gave herself up entirely to the delightful visions which flitted before her excited fancy. How long these lasted, Helen could not tell, as she had fallen into a sound sleep when the carriage stopped.

Thinking she had reached her home, she prepared to step out of the carriage, when suddenly the door was opened, and a man sprang into it, calling out to the driver, "Roger, go on!" Words cannot express the agony of the terrified girl at finding herself thus entirely at the mercy of this ruffian, for no other could she suppose him to be. Her first impulse was to open the window and scream for help. The former, however, she could not effect, for the stranger laid his hand gently but powerfully upon her arm, and said in a mild voice—

"Be not alarmed, Miss Leeson. The whole of this extraordinary proceeding will be explained to you before long; and I give you my word of honour that you will be restored to your family by the dawn of this day."

"Honour!" said Helen, with an accent that was not to be mistaken.

"I understand you," he said. "I have no right to expect that you should believe my words; and still," he added, with a sigh, "I am but the agent in this sad accident."

"But where am I?" she asked, somewhat reassured by the manner of her mysterious companion.

"That I am not at liberty to tell; question me not farther; but be assured that whatever part I may take in the occurrences of this night, it has been imposed upon me by an authority which I have no power to resist," he added, evidently much affected.

All this was not calculated to diminish Helen's alarm. It was evident that something terrific was in store for her; and under the increasing fear and excitement which she could no longer control, she threw herself on her knees before the person whose features she could scarcely distinguish.

"Oh! for Heaven's sake, for your mother's, your sister's sake, sir, let not this iniquitous deed take place; restore me to my family. Oh! take me home, for God's sake! Have you no feeling? Are you so insensible to a woman's cry for mercy? Oh!" she said, at last exasperated, "you are not an American; you could not resist my tears—my despair!"

Exhausted, she fell back, fainting. Her companion raised her gently, opened the carriage window, bathed her temples with cologne-water; and as she gradually revived,

he said in that soft, sweet voice, entirely unknown to her, but most soothing—

"Miss Leeson!—Helen!—do be calm! Have I not sworn to you that this very night you should return to your father's house, uninjured? and by all that is sacred, I swear to you now that you shall never hear from any of the actors of this mysterious deed. Be not alarmed; I know your brother Robert well; he calls me friend. To him I shall be answerable, if you should wish it, for my strange conduct to-night."

Somewhat comforted by these words, Helen resigned herself to her fate; and, covering her face with her handkerchief, she remained perfectly silent until the carriage stopped. It was so dark that it was utterly impossible to see any thing. The stranger alighted and opened a gate, after which he returned to the carriage.

"This is my father's house, Miss Leeson. Will you allow me to lead you up these steps, it is so dark?"

"Me!—no!" screamed the terrified girl. "You will murder me! Matthew! oh, save me!"

"Matthew has gone home. We have been driven here by a faithful servant of mine," said the gentleman, for such we must acknowledge him to be. "But let me entreat you to make no resistance; my protection, in that case, would be of no avail."

Helen felt the truth of this remark, and quietly allowed herself to be led up the wooden steps of what she supposed to be one of the old-fashioned country-houses, situated in the environs of New York.

She was not mistaken. The sound of the carriage had attracted an old woman, who opened the door, and ushered Helen and her mysterious companion into a small parlour, rather dimly illuminated.

There sat, in a large arm-chair near the fire, an elderly gentleman, who rose as they entered, and bowing to Helen with great courtesy, requested her to take the seat opposite to him, which she did, determined that no weakness on her part should betray the violent agitation of her feelings.

Helen's first impulse, however, was to cast a hurried glance at her ravisher. The scrutiny was most satisfactory and reassuring. But *he* had said that her fate that night depended not upon him!

"Now, father," said the young man, with bitterness, "I have obeyed your orders,—explain my ungentlemanly conduct to Miss Leeson. Would that I had never made that awful promise!" So saying, he sat down near the table, and buried his head in his hands.

'Your conduct, Walter?" said the old man. "If all were held responsible for actions far more dishonourable than yours, dreadful would be the account some would have to render. Now, Miss Leeson," he added, turning to Helen, who sat enveloped in her cloak, as pale and motionless as a beautiful statue, "I will comply with my son's request, and explain the extraordinary circumstances which have made you this night my unwilling guest. But, before I can make you understand my object, it is essential that I should speak of the past—of events which occurred some forty years ago, and which, of course, are unknown to you. You may have heard, however, that your father was not always the proud, wealthy, overbearing merchant he now is. But, no! Robert Leeson's pride is not of that noble kind which boasts of former poverty and self-made prosperity Well, this is nothing to the point. I would, if possible, avoid all useless criminations; and besides," he added, looking at the clock, "I have but an hour before me, and much must be done and told in that short space of

time. Some forty years ago," he continued, hurriedly, "Robert Leeson and I came over from Ireland, our native country, as cabin-boys, in the bark Donna Maria; not that *I* was too poor to pay my passage, but I was wise enough to keep the few hundreds my mother had given me, to build my fortune in this land of promise. Not so with Leeson. He had not a penny in the world. He had been a wild boy at school, and his father had sent him to sea, hoping that a life of privation and severe discipline would tame his unmanageable spirit. The poor fellow (I was fool enough to attach myself to him) was wretched, in despair. Ill all the passage, unable to move, he drank not a drop of water, tasted not a morsel of food that I did not bring to him. Many were the words of comfort which soothed his troubled mind; and a solemn promise to share my all with him brought joy and hope to the sick boy's heart.

"We arrived in New York. Robert had recovered his health some time before we reached the port, and I had discovered several traits in my companion's character which made me regret the rash promise I had made. However, I felt that it would be dishonourable to withdraw myself from an engagement which I considered sacred. I therefore told Leeson that we would both seek employment, and that as soon as I had found some permanent and profitable occupation, I would let him know. Meanwhile, I furnished him with the means of subsistence from my scanty purse.

"An opportunity most propitious of beginning business on a moderate scale soon offered itself. I determined not to allow it to escape; and having informed Leeson of my plans, I made all the necessary arrangements, rented a store in the lower part of the city, and we began the dry goods business, under the firm of—but you need not hear my name, now. As luck would have it—or thanks, perhaps,

to my unremitting exertions—we were most fortunate; and six months after, when I settled our accounts, I gave Leeson a sum four times as large as the whole of my small fortune when we began business. Our success continued, and for fifteen years we met with no reverses. At that time, we concluded that, our credit being considerable, and the means of increasing our business within our reach, it would be advisable to take a finer store, and assume a stand which our capital completely justified. I had married about five years previous to this period, and Walter was then a child—an apparent favourite with my partner, who was wont to say—'Wait till I get married, Walter. I will send to Paris for a little wife for you.'" Here the old man paused an instant, evidently much affected. "But why recall the only sweet recollections of those days?" he added, dashing away a tear. Helen and Walter had not moved. "About the time I allude to," he continued, "our business required my presence in Europe. I regretted leaving my wife and child, and alas! felt no security as regarded my business. Not that I entirely mistrusted my partner's honesty; but he was careless, irregular in his habits, and in fact incapable of taking so large a responsibility. However, he was equally unable to fill my mission abroad, and no alternative was left. I started with a heavy heart and dark misgivings, which, alas! deceived me not. I left my home a prosperous, wealthy man, and returned to it six months afterward, ruined—disgraced—a bankrupt! And still, not one word of reproach passed my lips as I met my partner, who acknowledged that rash speculations on his part had rendered it impossible for him to meet his engagements. We parted. I settled the business to the best of my ability, but in a very unsatisfactory manner to my creditors, who were harsh and cruel in their accusations. I was

known to be the leading head in our concern, and the whole blame was thrown upon me, not only by strangers, but by Leeson himself, as I afterward heard; the man whom I had loved, protected, raised from obscurity at the expense of my very being, and who had robbed me, basely robbed me, of eighty thousand dollars!"

"It is false!" exclaimed Helen, suddenly roused from her lethargy. "My father never could have acted thus!"

"Be calm, young lady," continued the old man; "my story is not finished. Many months elapsed before I had the conviction of what I had suspected. A clerk in our employ made the dreadful confession on his death-bed; and while I was struggling with want and despair, Leeson, who had always been fond of society, was courting, nay, marrying, the rich Miss Marsy, and with her money and mine he established a house on an extensive scale. Happy, prosperous, not once did he inquire the fate of his former partner. Ill luck seemed to pursue me; but I could have stood all, had heaven left me the blessed angel who had supported and comforted me. My wife, my poor Mary, was taken; and as her holy spirit fled from me, the angel of darkness took possession of my wretched self. I could stand it no longer. I went to Leeson, told him that I knew of his disgraceful conduct, and threatened to expose him if he did not return my money to me. He dared me to do it. Who would believe it? How could I prove it? And, finally, as I used some bitter and harsh expressions, he ordered me from his counting-house—drove me from his threshhold! Oh! that action has heaped coals of vengeance on his head! I returned to my home an altered, a wicked man!

"Eighteen years have I cherished that awful desire of revenge; and now that it is within my reach, I tremble at

the thought of indulging it! But no, no; pity cannot enter this broken, this agonized heart! It must be done!"

Helen moved not, but all the blood in her veins had rushed to her aching brain.

After a pause, her mysterious tormentor proceeded in a hurried, agitated manner—

"I did not lose sight of Robert Leeson in his prosperity. I heard of his having a son—not of that glorious kind which could gratify a father's pride. I heard of his second deformed daughter. *There*, too, was no chance for the indulgence of his favourite passion. I met you, and my mind was made up at once. You were the blade wherewith to make the guilty man's heart bleed. But how could I accomplish my object? Walter, the very moral and physical image of his sainted mother, never would consent to be my agent in this mysterious proceeding. Long, long did I ponder over the means of executing my purpose. For the last six months I assumed a different character—went out with my son, even took him to the opera whenever he had a chance of seeing you; and I gradually watched the effects of my exertions, which—thanks to your extraordinary beauty, and perhaps to fate, that faithful avenger—were successful. You became the very light of his life!"

"Father, father!" exclaimed the young man, "for God's sake, spare me!"

"Why so? Miss Leeson may be proud of the conquest," added the father with bitterness. "Well, one day I reminded Walter of his mother's last prayer, to be a dutiful son to me, to follow my least injunctions. I made him swear solemnly upon the Bible, under pain of my curse, that he would obey my orders, and then I declared to him what my plans were; to devise some means of bring-

ing you to this house, and compelling you to marry him this very night."

Helen started up as though she had been stung by a viper. One scream of agony escaped her lips, and she fell back on the arm-chair.

Her merciless persecutor continued—

"I have made all the necessary arrangements. The minister will be here in a quarter of an hour. Miss Leeson, you must to-night become my son's wife, after which you will return to your father's, and I shall never attempt to see you again. Or, if you refuse to comply with my wishes, I will detain you here a week. Your absence cannot be explained. The distress of your family—the loss of your reputation—consider all this, and decide for yourself. I leave your fate in your own hands."

Helen saw and felt how impossible it would be to extricate herself from the horrible catastrophe. In one moment her mind was filled with contrary visions of the dreadful alternative. A ring was heard at the bell. The old gentleman rose and left the room for a few moments.

"Oh!" exclaimed the wretched girl, "can you not save me? Speak—speak, Walter—whoever you are! If you have any pity in your soul, spare me this bitter trial!"

"I cannot!" was the sad answer. "This minute I would give my life to avert the sacrifice, but my father has declared that you would be reserved for a fate a thousand times worse, if I withdrew my consent." The door opened.

"What is your answer, Miss Leeson?"

"I am ready!" said Helen, her blanched lip quivering with pride and anger. She tore off the wreath of golden grapes which ornamented her hair, threw it from her

wrapped her cloak around her, and stood apparently unmoved.

"Walter," said the stranger, "escort your bride."

The young man looked up, with an expression of countenance far more wretched than Helen's. He rose and followed his father, who led the way into an adjoining room. There stood the minister in his robes. The old woman who had opened the door was present also, apparently unconscious of what was going on. The ceremony began; but when the minister said—"Helen, will you take Walter to be your wedded husband?" the poor child thought that the very powers of darkness would appear to prevent the deed. She hesitated a moment—but it was said at last, and Helen, the beautiful daughter of the proud and arrogant Robert Leeson, became the wife of a stranger—a man whose name was unknown, and who had become an object of execration to her.

As soon as the ceremony was over, the minister and the old man left the room. Helen heard the sound of the carriage. It was four o'clock.

"Now—now let me go!" she exclaimed.

Walter opened the door and led her down the steps.

"Will you not allow me to take you home?" he said.

"No—no! I can go alone—home—any where—far from this house and its inmates!" she exclaimed. "Oh! you have broken my heart—you have blighted my whole existence!"

"Speak not thus, Helen. Say not that you will never forgive the innocent part I have taken in this mysterious event. Oh! one word before we part forever!" he said. "One word of mercy! Will you not forgive me?"

"Never!" she cried, as she sprang into the carriage;

and, burying her face in her hands, burst into a violent flood of tears.

The carriage door was closed, and an hour after these extraordinary proceedings, Helen stopped at her father's door. Oh! how changed—how different from the brilliant girl, who, but a few hours before, had left that happy home!

CHAPTER IV.

How differently did the two sisters rest that night! While Helen in vain endeavoured to calm her agitated spirit, and sought to obliterate the dreadful vision from her memory, Anna slept the sleep of the pure. Sweet sounds of love and peace echoed around her, and radiant dreams visited the young girl, such as the worldly seldom know.

Anna's was a bright, a holy spirit. Nature, in afflicting the body, had gifted the mind with her choicest treasures; and as she herself declared, many were the joys of Anna's inward being which others could never feel. Oh! blessed are those whom a link of earthly sorrow binds so closely to the Redeemer—so closely that the murmurs of heavenly communion can reach their hearts unbroken by louder sounds!

The young girl's life was a busy one of affection and charity. She was the brilliant light ever ready to illuminate the path of the afflicted. She had her poor to visit, her young people to teach. There never came an appeal to Anna's heart and purse that did not convey to the sufferer words of comfort and substantial relief. Thus it was, that when at night rest visited that kind, devoted child, the angels who had been her constant companions during the day still watched near her pillow.

"Is it late?" said Anna Leeson to Sophie, the little French maid, as she made her noiseless entrance that morning.

"Seven o'clock, Miss Anna. Will you get up now?"

"Oh! yes. I expect my scholars at nine, and must see to my birds and flowers. At what hour did sister come in, Sophie?"

"Indeed, I don't exactly know, as there is no clock in the library. Madam had given me leave to lie down on the sofa, and I was fast asleep when mademoiselle rang the bell. She ran up stairs, all muffled up in her cloak, and bid me go to bed immediately, as she did not require my services. I think she said it was three o'clock."

"Did I not hear a noise earlier in the night, Sophie? I am sure I did. It was a man's step, and the sound seemed to come from Matthew's room, just above here. I first thought he had got into a frolic. You know, Sophie, that has happened several times, lately; in fact, I gave him a good lecture, the other day."

"Yes, miss," said Sophie, laughing; "he told us about it, and added that Miss Anna's scoldings were as sweet as rock-candy!"

"Well, the fact is," said Anna, blushing, "I acted somewhat against my principles, for I actually promised him a new coat for Christmas, if he gave up drinking."

"So he said," replied Sophie, while she prepared every thing for her mistress's toilet.

"Have you written to your mother, lately?" continued the young monitress, as though she were twenty years older than her pupil.

"Yes, Miss Anna; I write regularly, since you told me how wrong it was to neglect that sacred duty. Ah! I remember," added Sophie; "the noise you heard must have been your father coming home. I know he told Jackson it was twelve o'clock."

"No, no!" interrupted Anna, who always avoided any

allusion to the only subject which gave her positive pain; "it was later than that; and if I were not sure that Matthew drove Helen home at three o'clock, I should be convinced that it was he, and his step was not a steady one by any means; it woke me out of a sound sleep, which, however, soon closed my peepers again," she added, smiling. "Now I am ready for you, my chickeys," she said, preparing to provide her birds with their daily food. "And then I will take a look at my roses and camelias. I must have a fine one in bloom for Aunt Seraph's birthday; she never forgets mine. Don't you remember, Sophie, the magnificent basket of violets she sent me, last year, with that sweet little message on gilt paper—'*Herself to herself?*' No one but Aunt Seraph could think of such a phrase as that. I was so pleased, that for half a second I was actually vain. Is mamma up, Sophie?"

"I believe not; Mrs. Boget told me that she was waiting for madam's orders in the sewing-room."

"Well, then, I must creep in and take a glimpse of sister. I love to see her asleep, she is so beautiful!"

And the sweet child opened Helen's door, and moved noiselessly toward her bed. She was asleep. Her hair, which she had scarcely arranged, as she threw herself on her pillow, exhausted by the violent emotions of the night, hung loose around her. The eyes were closed, but the tear still glistened on the dark lashes, and the lip quivered as though the agony were still within that heaving bosom, upon which the hands were clasped as in prayer. A bright flush enhanced her exquisite beauty, but caused the anxious girl to pause and look again with alarm at the unusual signs which Helen's countenance betrayed.

"She is ill," she muttered—"very ill!" And leaving the room with the same light step, she went down to the sewing-room to seek the seamstress, whose opinion she wished to have before communicating her fears to her mother.

Mrs. Boget was one of those valuable domestic authorities whom a few families still possess, but who are, alas! almost reduced to traditionary beings. She had lived with Mrs. Leeson since her marriage, had nursed all her children from their birth with a tender, motherly care; more judicious than can generally be expected, and, in fact, considered them quite her own. There was not an event, great or trifling, in which Mrs. Boget's opinion was not asked; and this mark of regard and esteem on the part of the whole family had become her due, from the extreme discretion with which she behaved at all times.

That morning the worthy woman was as usual at work in a comfortable little room devoted to her especial use, and which often, even at that period, was visited by the young people for the sake of having a chat with the friend of their earliest childhood.

"Boget," said Anna, as she came in with a look of concern on her usually bright countenance, "Helen is ill, I am afraid; I wish you would come up to see her."

"Yes, darling," was the immediate reply. And the old servant rose and followed Anna's tottering step.

Boget was quite as worried, if not more so, than Anna, at the extraordinary appearance of her precious Helen, as she called her. Without alarming Mrs. Leeson, she despatched Caleb, the waiter's assistant, for Dr. Clifford, the family physician, and then went in to her mistress to take her orders, leaving Sophie to watch over the patient.

"Are my daughters well, Boget?" was Mrs. Leeson's first question.

"I think, ma'am, Miss Helen has over-fatigued herself, and has a little fever. I told Caleb to step around to the doctor's before he starts on his morning calls."

"That was right. Oh! this life of dissipation will kill the poor child!" added the anxious mother, as she hastily finished dressing; and telling Mrs. Boget to send Anna to her father to attend to his breakfast, she hurried up stairs.

Helen awoke as Mrs. Leeson entered the room, and started up with a wild look of terror, which chilled the poor mother's heart.

"Helen, darling, what is the matter? Are you in pain? Speak—tell me!"

The agitated girl threw her arms around her mother's neck, and sobbed violently.

Just then Mrs. Boget came in, followed by Doctor Clifford, the dear old welcome comforter, whose presence always soothed a pain or dried a tear.

"Well, well! what is going on here?" he said. "Our fairy belle in bed? And after creating such a sensation last night? I have heard all about it; for I was called this morning to attend Lord Devere, who was more frightened than hurt," added the doctor, laughing. As may well be supposed, these reminiscences of broken joys and crushed triumphs were not calculated to calm the aching spirit of poor Helen. Finding that words did not do, the good doctor ordered a dose of ether, which soon quieted the patient; and after a short time, a sweet sleep, during which the fond mother could not be induced to leave her child, relieved Helen of her suffering.

But the doctor was not satisfied with the pulse of his patient. He told Mrs. Boget, who was always the depository of his medical conclusions, that he dreaded a nervous fever, and would return in the evening to see the effect of a composing draught which he had ordered. His fears were realized; that night, Mrs. Leeson, Aunt Seraph, and Boget watched by the sick bed with aching hearts. Helen's delirium almost amounted to insanity.

"Oh! mother, aunt, save me!" she cried. "There, there; don't you see him? He will murder me! Your wife? Oh! never, never!" And it was with difficulty that the tender nurses prevented the wretched girl from rushing out of her bed.

Anna, in tears, knelt to pray for the precious sister she loved so well. And where was Robert Leeson?

The unhappy father paced his splendid saloons the greater part of the night, in an agony of mind which no words can express; for *he* felt that the trial was not undeserved, and that all his earthly joys were about to be snatched from him. But God is merciful; how much more so than man!

Helen recovered—thanks to her extreme youth and Doctor Clifford; nay, also to the excellent nursing which she received from the loving ones around her. But was she happy? When restored to her senses, she could look back, and with her mind's sight recall all—every detail of her existence during the last four days. A feeling of despair filled her heart! But bitter as it was, far more miserable was the afflicted one, who night after night watched the light from Helen's window during that cold December weather, and once only ventured to inquire of the doctor, as he left the house, "about Miss Leeson's health."

"Better, much better, sir," said the kind physician; "but she was very near taking her flight to the happy land up there. Are you ill, young man?" he added; "you are very pale."

"No, no; thank you! Good morning, sir."

"A queer fellow, that!" said the doctor, as he entered his gig.

CHAPTER V.

AND where was the Countess Laura during her cousin's illness? Alas! she was unable to go out. A violent cough had alarmed Miss Marsy so much, that she positively forbade her niece's leaving the house. Besides, what could she do for Helen, who had excellent care, and whose ravings would have broken Laura's heart?—that heart already so torn!

Let us pause a moment, and say a few words of the fate of that young and beautiful creature, whom grief had crushed so soon. Laura's mother, Mrs. Elliot, was the youngest sister of Mrs. Leeson and Miss Marsy. She was scarcely twenty when Laura was born, and one year sufficed to make the child an orphan; the mother died of consumption, and George Elliot, whom despair at the loss of his lovely companion had driven from home, was lost at sea. Aunt Seraph, who had ever watched with fond care over her young sister, immediately claimed the little one whom fate left thus unprotected. Miss Marsy's means being considerable, she had always chosen to occupy a house of her own; perhaps because Mr. Leeson's restless, imperious temper little agreed with her meek and gentle spirit.

The precious infant was a welcome blessing in the maiden's household; even the old servants were glad to receive the little one, who was to be as a blooming flower in the midst of them.

Laura grew up in that congenial atmosphere, and her fine mind, well trained by her aunt's valuable examples and precepts, brought forth fruits of intelligence, such as could well satisfy her adopted parent. But (there is, alas! always a but) Laura was wild—too wild for her feeble constitution. No sooner had her sixteenth birthday dawned, and brought to the young girl all the charms which our American women so frequently possess, than she became impatient to go into society, to mix with the gay, to be courted, admired; in short, to receive the tribute which she felt was her due. This restless and frequently-expressed desire of her darling child was a great trial to Aunt Seraph: she could not understand it, and for the first time she spoke a few harsh words to her nicce.

"Really, aunt," Laura replied, "you are unjust: here have I spent sixteen years in quiet retirement; and now, that I want to take a glimpse, just a glimpse, of the fine things of this world, you scold as though the very desire were sinful!"

"You mistake me, dearest; my only motive in opposing your wish is, that you may become too fond of dissipation, at the expense of your health. Your poor mother certainly injured hers, by being out night after night in all weathers," she added.

"Well, what is the use of living, if one is doomed to be shut up in a cage?" Bitterly did Laura regret those cruel words when she looked up from her work, and saw tears streaming down that loved countenance, which had always beamed with affection and devotion to her; and how great had been the care taken to render that cage an earthly Paradise! Every comfort, every luxury, had been lavished upon her; she felt how ungrateful she was. "Forgive me, dearest—best," she said, as she knelt and wiped the pearly

drop that fell on Aunt Seraph's embroidery; and Laura kissed the withered cheek, and forced the dear friend to smile.

"Now, I will give up the idea entirely," she said; "and never worry you about it again." Rash, rash promise! The following winter, Mrs. Leeson gave a few small parties for Helen, who was leaving school, and had a large circle of young associates. Laura was there, of course, in her simple white muslin dress, and many were the expressions of admiration elicited by those soft blue eyes and luxuriant curls—so light, so fair, it seemed as though a sunbeam surrounded the beautiful countenance.

Robert Leeson was then entering manhood—a good-natured, noble fellow, but possessing a very small amount of capacity. He had grown up with the fatal conviction that his father was wealthy, and therefore, expecting to inherit a large property, why should he rack his brain to acquire knowledge which he never would stand in need of? Year after year brought Robert home for the Christmas holidays, and still no improvement was perceptible. In vain Aunt Seraph reasoned with the boy, promised most tempting rewards if he would exert himself to obtain some distinction in his classes, and prophesied bitter disappointments for the future. He would laugh at her warnings, and declare that study was a bore. "Time and tide wait for no one." So it was with Robert Leeson; his nineteenth birthday came around, and he was a man before he ever thought of the necessity of assuming a position in the world.

Mr. Leeson, too much engaged by his business, and, like many fathers, too indifferent to the moral training of his son, was sadly disappointed when the certainty of Robert's being any thing but brilliant flashed across his mind. His

cherished dream had been to make a lawyer of his son—to see him distinguish himself in a career which he considered far above that which chance had assigned to him. But with such an education as Robert had received, he was totally unfit to undertake the immense amount of study which would have been requisite to make a lawyer of him; besides which, he brought forth, in opposition to his father's wish, the very same argument which had mastered his better judgment ever since he could reason at all.

"What is the use, father, of torturing my poor brain—of filling it with all that trash? Why, if I were the son of a poor man, it would be worth while."

"Stupid fool!" was the gracious reply. "Supposing I was to lose my fortune to-morrow, what would become of you?"

"Oh! that is quite impossible, you know!" and as filial submission is not, we are sorry to say, one of the leading traits in the character of the present generation, Robert generally shook off the paternal authority; and the consequence was, that Mr. Leeson, finding it impossible to gain his point, and dreading the idle life which his son was leading, insisted upon his going down to the counting-house and doing *something*, as he called it. This generally amounted to writing a letter or two, having sundry talks with the other clerks, and finally taking a walk up Broadway at four o'clock to meet the belles. And who was the loveliest of that bevy of beauties who were so prodigal of their charms day after day in that universal bazaar of humanity? Who was it that Robert met and walked home with, arm in arm, in delightful tete-a-tete, until Aunt Seraph declared that Laura was getting too old, and must not walk out at that hour in Broadway.

Laura was the belle of belles in Robert's eyes; and he

would have undergone any trial, nay would have read the most abstract volume, to obtain one smile. But Laura was sparing of those smiles toward her amorous cousin; she was devotedly attached to him, but did not fancy his calling her his little wife, and looking at her in that loving manner. The truth was, that Miss Elliot was a highly-educated girl; and, with that keen instinct which distinguishes her sex, she felt that Robert was her inferior in knowledge and intellect. The idea of looking down upon this juvenile personification of a husband, was most repugnant to Laura's feelings; and she endeavoured to check her cousin's increasing admiration by various little feminine rules, half in jest and half in earnest.

It was about this time that the discussion we have alluded to between kind Aunt Seraph and her adopted child took place. Perhaps it was in order to shake off Robert's assiduous devotion, that the young girl was so anxious to go into society; nay, but we must own it, Dame Vanity was not a stranger to that ardent wish.

Mrs. Grantly gave a birthday party for Helen that winter; and as nothing could be simply unostentatiously arranged in that brilliant establishment, the juvenile soiree was almost a ball, save that, as is customary in our society *sometimes*, the married ladies were left out, and fifty or sixty young people were invited to partake of the splendid entertainment of Grantly Hall, as our friend Herman, whom we hope to meet soon again, called it. By-the-by, *he* was there, and a great favourite with all the ladies. Why not become acquainted with Herman at once? He is such a nice fellow, and we shall meet him often at the Leesons! Mrs. Smith, Herman's mother, had been a schoolmate of Mrs. Leeson's—a devoted friend. They married at the same period, but far different was their fate.

While the rich heiress settled in a splendid establishment in New York, every wish gratified, hope offering every security for a happy future, her friend went to live quietly in a country town in New England, and for many years they lost sight of each other. One day, long after fate had proved her capricious ways, Mrs. Leeson, whose married life had been clouded by bitter trials, received a letter from the companion of her childhood. Hers had been a happy lot, but death had just severed the tie which bound her to the joys of this world. Her husband had been taken; and Mrs. Smith entreated her friends to find a situation for her son Herman in a counting-house in New York. Mr. Leeson was appealed to, and as a vacancy offered itself at that time in his office, he consented to take him. Never had he cause to repent the condescension he had shown on that occasion. Young Smith proved a most valuable acquisition; but one of the moral tortures of his employer, was the sad comparison which he was forced to make between his clerk and his own son. Robert saw not, felt not, the disadvantage of being thus placed, as it were, in contrast to the young man to whom he was sincerely attached. They were friends—devoted friends.

But let us return to Mrs. Grantly's party; some interesting details await us there. Among the many beaux invited by especial suggestion of our quondam acquaintance, Harry Marvell, was Count Marini, a young Italian nobleman of great wealth, who was on a pleasure trip to this country, and who was graciously smiled upon by the fair ladies, to whom the prospect of being a countess was most fascinating. Count Arthur was a young man of refined manners, elegant appearance—a perfect gentleman in every respect. He had brought a letter of introduction to Mr. Leeson from a correspondent of his in Naples, but

had hitherto neglected presenting it, under the plea that his stay in New York was to be very short, as he was desirous of visiting the principal cities in the Union before the spring. Harry Marvell, convinced of the effect he would produce upon Mrs. Grantly and her youthful guests, insisted upon the count's going to the birthday party; and that evening decided the young man's fate.

"Who is that distinguished-looking stranger, Helen?" whispered Laura, as they sat surrounded by a circle of admiring and chatty beaux—say boys.

"I don't know," said Helen; "but will soon, I think."

She was not mistaken. Mr. Marvell came up at this moment and introduced the young nobleman to the cousins.

Helen aimed one or two arrows at the count's heart, but finding him invulnerable, she turned her attention in another quarter. Not so with Laura; she began a desperate flirtation, danced with the young man half of the evening, and made him promise that he would call upon her uncle the next day to deliver his letter; which he did, we must acknowledge, most willingly.

Six weeks after, as Aunt Seraph sat quietly at work in her library, indulging her favourite communion with the little fairy which is commonly called Fancy, Mrs. Levett, the housekeeper, came in to announce a visit from Count Marini.

"Not for *me*, surely, Levett?" said Miss Marsy.

"'Tis indeed, ma'am. The gentleman—a mighty handsome one he is, too—asked for Miss Marsy."

"Very strange!" thought the maiden. "I suppose the young man has got into some scrape with Robert about his admiration for Laura." Unaccustomed to the European mode of proceeding under such circumstances, Miss Marsy never dreamt of the real motive of the young man's visit.

She therefore made a hurried toilet, being reluctant to appear before such a *beau* in her simple dishabille. Attired in one of the fashionable cashmeres, and a cap with flashy ribbons, which Laura had insisted upon her purchasing, Aunt Seraph, with her most gracious smile, entered the drawing-room. She was astounded when the count explained to her the object of his requested interview. He was in love, desperately in love with Laura, and being perfectly independent, he came to ask Miss Marsy's consent, as the only thing requisite for his happiness. He had not, he said, spoken *plainly* to Miss Elliot, but he hoped that she was aware of his passion, and that with her aunt's approval, she would not reject him.

What could the dear old friend say, as she gazed at the handsome fellow, whose powers of fascination *she* could scarcely resist? Was it astonishing that he should have succeeded in obtaining Laura's affection? She made several objections, such as his being a foreigner—a Catholic; but he promised to live in America; and although he would not give up his religion, he assured Miss Marsy that he never would influence his wife in that respect.

Matters were at a crisis, when Laura happened to come into the drawing-room. The young girl's blushing consent was easily obtained; and before Arthur left the house, he was engaged to Laura Elliot.

Two months after, by a bright afternoon in April, Aunt Seraph stood at the parlour window, watching with tearful eyes a carriage which was just driving off, and which contained all she loved—her two children, as she called Arthur and Laura—on their wedding tour to Niagara. But what a joyful day was that upon which the happy couple returned to her house, now their home! A suite of rooms, elegantly furnished, had been prepared for them; and when they sat

down to dinner, at five o'clock, Miss Marsy exclaimed—"Well, God has been bountiful in his blessings to me!"

True happiness, they say, belongs not to this land of wo; or, at least, if it should dawn upon us at rare intervals, its rays are soon dimmed by the dark cloud of adversity.

Six months of perfect bliss, such as is seldom enjoyed here below, were granted to Laura and her husband. Robert, who had become gradually reconciled to what he called Arthur's usurpation, was very fond of the young count, and many were the rides on horseback they took together.

One fatal day, as Laura, unconscious of evil, was enjoying a merry chat with Alice Irving and Helen, she was suddenly alarmed by a message from her aunt, to come home immediately. The carriage had been sent for her.

With an anxious heart, the young countess entered her home, which, alas! had been suddenly transformed into a house of mourning. Arthur had been thrown from his horse, had fractured his skull, and could not live more than a few hours.

Oh! who can describe the agony of the young creature whose every joy was crushed by that fatal blow?

"Dearest—best-loved!" murmured the young man, as he lay struggling with the ebbing life which but a short time before he had grasped with so much power. "Think of yourself, Laura—think of our child, whom I had hoped to bless. Alas! alas! life was sweet with thy love, my own Laura. But God wills it not. Let me die in peace with him—with all!"

He did die, like a Christian; and as the spirit flew to the land of rest, Miss Marsy and Levett carried out the poor blighted one, who was unconscious of the last farewell. . .

A change came over that gloomy, dismal abode. Laura's

tears still flowed, but they were tears of love and submission to the divine decree; for on the youthful mother's bosom lay a sleeping infant—a blossom of love, which God in his mercy had sent to dry the mourner's tears.

Little Arty was a welcome inmate, as his mother had been seventeen years before; and Aunt Seraph once more thought that many blessings were hers. But Laura's drooping spirit never rose again; and at times a hacking cough and a hectic flush upon that pale cheek made her doating aunt's heart ache. Laura was apparently contented. Her devotion to the little one—the living link which bound her to her departed husband—was extreme; but save when called upon to amuse little Arthur, or exert herself for the benefit of others, a smile was seldom seen upon that sad countenance, where joy had rested once, but upon which grief had left its ineffaceable stamp.

We have said much—not too much, we trust—about the young countess, as she was Helen's bosom friend, in affection her sister, and the depositary of all her cares and joys; for between Helen and Anna years and different pursuits had raised a barrier which love could easily overleap, but which rendered their intercourse much less congenial than that which existed between her cousin and herself.

CHAPTER VI.

"Doctor," said Helen to the old gentleman who was visiting his patient during the last days of her convalescence, "will you not allow Laura to go out, now? I am *terribly* anxious to see her."

"Well, yes," was the welcome answer. "The weather is very fine, to-day. I think you could both take a drive. You know," he added, laughing, "I am in duty bound to restore you to the host of admirers who are sighing for my fairy belle. Now, dear child, farewell: no imprudence, remember. By-the-by, speaking of admirers, reminds me of a forlorn—that is, sad-looking—young fellow, who accosted me a few days ago as I was leaving this house, to inquire about your health. He looked very much as if the same inquiry might be made of himself. In fact, I did ask him if he was ill. Some fit subject for the lunatic asylum; and still, a very handsome fellow, too—large, black eyes, so bright and piercing, dark hair, beautiful features; but such a look of agony! The vision pursued me for several hours. I wonder who it could have been?"

"Don't know," said Helen, with indifference. But a pang shot across her mind. "Good-morning, doctor," she added, as the old physician took his leave.

No—she could bear it no longer. She must reveal that terrible secret to some sympathizing ear; and to whom? To her mother? No; *she* might be distressed. Besides, thought the young girl, she is *not* the proper person—she is too old. Alas! that such a conclusion should proceed

from the lips, from the heart, of a child, regarding a loving, kind, sensible mother! But that very mother, notwithstanding her many qualities, was responsible for the want of confidence her daughter felt in her. This is one of the defective traits in modern education; and the great independence which is universally conceded to our young people, makes this sad consequence still more glaring here than elsewhere. Daughters and sons will smile at the *old-fashioned* notion of allowing parents to be wiser, better judges of their welfare than their young, inexperienced selves. Scarcely have age and physical strength loosened the link of dependence which binds them to a parent's protection, than they are most anxious to sever the tie; and what is the consequence? The mother's superior knowledge and judgment become totally unavailing to save her child from the many evil influences ever ready to blight the young mind.

Might not this sad result be avoided by accustoming our children, from their earliest infancy, to look upon us as the support, the staff of their tottering reason? and with love and indulgence for their little errors, might not this be obtained? The beneficial effects of such an intercourse of affection and good example are evident; and the coming generation would thus profit by the experience of the preceding one.

Reader, you may object to our detaining you thus for a few moments in the course of our narrative; but we have ever considered that novels being the most attractive, (that portion of literary productions most generally read,) a great many wholesome truths may thus be conveyed to the mass of social humanity in a manner which makes them less unwelcome, and the benignant effects are the same. May every novel-writer be fortunate enough to produce such a result!

"Marvellous! incomprehensible!" exclaimed Laura, as she was driving up the Fifth Avenue with Helen, who had just related her extraordinary adventures of the preceding week. "But how could you make up your mind to it? Why did you not scream?"

"Scream! When I was there alone, entirely unprotected, of what use would it have been? And besides, I was so terrified, so anxious to get out of that house, that I would have consented to any thing."

"Why did you not appeal to the minister?" asked Laura.

"To tell you the truth, I did not suppose he was a real minister; and, in fact, I thought that, at all events, the marriage would not be legal."

"It is not, certainly; but if it was known, it would create a terrible scandal. And where are those people to be found?"

"The young man told me he knew Robert, and would be answerable to him for his conduct. Oh, Laura! no words can express the bitterness, the feeling of hatred, I bear those two men. The father is a villain, and the son a coward!" Helen's eyes flashed with anger.

"What kind of a looking man was he?" asked Laura.

"Indeed, I scarcely know; and still, I am sure I never can forget his face, either. And just as fate was smiling upon me; just as so fair a prospect was before me!" added the young girl, bursting into tears. "Oh, Laura! I am so wretched!"

"Yes, dearest, and so am I; and great would be the anguish of your parents if they knew this, although there would be no difficulty in clearing up the whole affair with the aid of the police. But what a painful, disgraceful matter to be implicated in!"

"I have thought it all over," sobbed Helen, "and my

mind is made up on the subject. I had to confide my troubles to you, because my heart was bursting; but no other human being shall ever know this awful secret."

"Perhaps," interposed Laura, "when Robert returns, he may help us to find a clue to this mystery."

"No, no! Robert is young and thoughtless. He would hunt out the fellow, and blow his brains out. My husband that man! Oh, Laura, Laura!"

"Pray, dearest, pray. No earthly comfort can soothe the aching soul. In the inscrutable decrees of Providence, no voice save that of the Divine Consoler can bring relief; and this is mysterious, indeed. Poor, dear one!" she added, kissing her cousin.

"And only think of my leaving my wreath of golden grapes. I had to tell a fib about it to Sophie, who sent to aunt's and had the house in an uproar, because I said I had left it there! I cannot bear the idea of there being a trace of my presence in that awful place!"

"Could you not find the house?"

"Impossible! It was as dark as Erebus, and I so frightened that I was almost unconscious of what was going on."

"But," interposed the countess, "how do you account for that stranger's driving your father's carriage?"

"Well, I cannot, except that I think Matthew was intoxicated, (probably the other man contributed to it;) and while old Matthew was tottering home, that agent of the evil spirit was driving me off to destruction in our own carriage. Strange! is it not? But, Laura, could that man have spoken the truth? could my father have been guilty of that disgraceful action? Oh! the thought makes my brain reel! Do you believe it, Laura?"

"I hope not—trust not," said the young countess, who

remembered having heard it whispered once by her husband, that Mr. Leeson's reputation was not without a blemish. "But, darling," she added, "let us drop the subject now, to resume it whenever it will be a relief to you to communicate your thoughts to a sister's sympathizing ear. Let us talk over the gayeties of the coming week. You know your aunt (thanks to Lord Devere's indisposition!) has been delighted to put off her dinner-party to next Thursday, and you will be there, of course."

"What is all that to me, now?" sighed Helen; "and what will Sir Archibald think of the change in my manner?"

"Now come, Elly, you do not care for that young, insignificant shoot of English nobility?"

"Well, not exactly; but he is a nice sort of a person, and I should have fancied being Lady Courtnay. Poor aunt! it would break her heart, if she knew all this!"

"A nice sort of a person!" repeated Laura. "Is that the kind of husband for Helen Leeson? I would rather never marry than put up with such a lot. Oh! do not mourn over that fallen hope, dearest! Sir Archibald is not the person *I* regret to lose in this sad business."

"I know who you mean; but father never would give his consent."

"The more wrong he," responded the countess, as they stopped at Helen's door.

"And Sir Archibald will marry Cora Dalton—only think, Laura!" said the dejected girl, as she kissed her cousin; and leaning on Jackson's arm, she entered the house.

Laura drove home.

Again we say, Poor humanity! how frail and blind thou art!

CHAPTER VII.

BEING entirely well, Helen could no longer refuse the many invitations which she received, nor could she resist the urgent entreaties of her aunt, who was still in pursuit of her favourite plan. Mrs. Leeson objected, remonstrated, but, as usual, had to give up to the arguments of her sister-in-law and to the imperious orders of her husband. Poor Mrs. Leeson! There are many domestic victims in the same style, whose silent martyrdom could well claim a crown from the Divine Judge of our most secret thoughts. Theirs will be a glorious reward, for they have borne the cross meekly and in silence; but great will be the account which the author of their agony will have to render!

The dinner-party at Grantly Hall was magnificent; a thousand delicacies were produced to tempt the guests, and lights and flowers rendered them tenfold more delicious. A band of music, concealed in the conservatory, sent forth melodious sounds, which only rendered the conversation more exciting. Helen sat, *par hasard*, near Sir Archibald, whose first experience of Helen's loquacity having been most agreeable to his dormant powers, waited quietly until his fair neighbour should resume her easy task of entertaining him. But he was doomed to disappointment. With the exception of a few commonplace remarks, Miss Leeson was unusually silent; and, in fact, had it not been for Harry Marvell, who sat on the other side, the change in her manner had been perceptible to every one.

Marvell was one of those invaluable members of society whom the genius of sociability has undoubtedly brought forth, as a connecting tie between the many broken links of its votaries. To say the truth, his whole powers were bent upon that one object. He was a business man merely because he could not help it, and a few essential hours were all he devoted to it. The rest of his life belonged to his friends, as he styled them; not that he was fool enough to think them such, but the word sounded well to his fastidious ears, and Harry was not a man to reject the slightest trifle which could give him even a pleasurable feeling. He was right there. In fact, it is not only true charity, but the very best policy, to take a pleasant view of every thing in this deceptive world; and trying to believe that we *have* friends, often induces us to be friendly to others. Harry Marvell saw that Helen was out of sorts; and not being an aspirer to Miss Leeson's hand, he felt no jealousy at her admiration for the young Englishman, and endeavoured to come to her assistance.

"Has Sir Archibald seen any of our fine paintings at the Art Union?" interposed Marvell, just in time to rouse the young nobleman, who was falling into a dose.

This being addressed to Helen, she immediately caught at the idea.

"I don't know; have you, Sir Archibald? There are some beautiful things."

"Yes, I was there once; but I am no judge of paintings. Uncle said they could not be good, as there are no artists in this country; but the frames are very elegant."

Helen smiled, and thought of Laura.

"Have you many engagements for this week, Miss Leeson?" inquired Marvell. "We are to have a select party

at the Elvingtons—I understand a philopœna soiree, given to Miss Dalton. By-the-by, Sir Archibald, have you that pretty little custom in England?"

"What?" asked the young man.

Helen explained the matter, and then went on to speak of valentines and various other little English notions, with which the gentleman seemed quite familiar.

Marvell turned his attention in another quarter. He cast a side glance at Mac Tavish, who was taking advantage of his vicinity to Emma Grantly.

"Silly fellow!" thought Harry, "that flashy vest and blue cravat will be the death of him; and with red whiskers, too! Stupid Scotchman!" Marvell was well aware of the fact, which must have originated in society, that "from little causes great events arise." Let us, however, render our sensible friend Emma the justice to say, that she was not one of those who could be influenced by a flashy vest and a blue cravat.

After dinner, the ladies adjourned to the drawing-room, and while Mr. Leeson, (who had made a desperate effort, in the hope of effecting his sister's cherished dream,) Lord Devere, and several gentlemen remained at table, drinking and talking politics, Mac Tavish requested Marvell to show him the conservatory, to which, with his usual good grace, he acceded.

"Now, what is the matter, Mac, my boy?" asked Harry. "I see 'there is something rotten in the state of Denmark,' as the old saying goes."

"Decayed, my dear fellow—quite dead," sighed the young Scotchman. "Here I have been, like Diogenes, for some time past in search of a sensible woman; and just as fate befriends me, ill-luck steps in and mars all my prospects."

"How so?" asked Marvell, unable to refrain from smiling at the doleful expression of his friend's countenance. "I thought you were doing wonders in that quarter."

"Well, I thought so too. I strained every nerve to make myself agreeable, and was sure I had succeeded; but at the first hint at something serious, the lady gave me such an answer, that I cannot think of going on with my suit. By George! it vexes me beyond expression. Do you think there is any one else in the way?" added Mac Tavish, with an inquiring look.

"Can't tell you, my dear fellow," said Harry; "dont know. Miss Emma is hard to please, and, to tell you the truth, you are one of the few who have been fortunate enough to interest her. But I would not give up all hopes: perseverance is one of Cupid's most essential auxiliaries."

"Nonsense! Do you think me fool enough to hang about a woman, when she has made me understand plainly that I had nothing to expect?" answered the young man.

"Well, then, we will try some other belle. You are not particular about choosing a wife in the tip-top fashion, are you?"

"No, not exactly, although I must say that I have a smattering of aristocracy about me: my mother was a Mac Gregor."

"I think I know a fair lady who will suit you exactly," replied Marvell; "but you must wait a while, before I introduce you to her, my engagements are so numerous just now. But," he added, "let me give you a salutary piece of advice, my dear fellow: never wear that red vest again—it is not becoming, indeed."

"Why?" responded Mac Tavish. "It cost me a small fortune."

"Sorry," laughed Marvell; "but it is a wretched *investment.* Pretty good pun; hey, Mac?"

"The young Scotchman was too well bred and amiable not to take a joke—even at the expense of his good taste. He laughed heartily, and the friends returned to the drawing-room.

The gentlemen had left the table, and an animated conversation was going on.

"You have not yet seen all the beauties of our country, my lord?" said Emma to Lord Devere, who sat near her.

"My knowledge of America and its inhabitants is very limited as yet, but what I have already seen of them has given me a strong desire to become better acquainted with both," answered his lordship, with that ease and refinement of manner which betrayed good breeding. Lord Devere was a perfect gentleman, highly educated and intellectual—a real type of an English nobleman; and as Emma listened to his fluent and instructive conversation, she thought, how much more proud would *she* be of his lordship's notice, even with the incumbrance of his sixty years and gray hairs, than of the admiration of Sir Archibald, with his rosy cheeks and empty brain!

Cora Dalton, who was one of the guests, like a skilful mariner watched the change in Helen's manner toward the young nobleman; she saw, also, that Mac Tavish and Emma were much less together than of late; and as no flirt can have too many strings to her bow, she resolved to lay snares for both prizes, little dreaming that the poor fellow rejected by Miss Grantly was only to be captivated by a *sensible woman.*

The ladies were called upon for a little music. Emma was a beautiful player, and Helen's voice generally created

a great sensation; but that evening she could not sing. Consequently, Miss Dalton's performance was greatly admired, and Sir Archibald declared that it was "fine—very fine!"

At last the wished-for hour for retiring came around; and it was a relief to poor Helen to leave the stage where she had played her constrained part in a manner so unsatisfactory to herself, so distressing to her aunt.

CHAPTER VIII.

"BOGET," said Mrs. Leeson, as she stepped into the sewing-room one morning after breakfast, "is Robert's apartment quite ready? Have the new curtains been put up? the arm-chair embroidered by my sister placed near the bed? You know we expect the dear boy to-day or to-morrow," added the delighted mother.

"I spent the whole of yesterday arranging Mr. Robert's room, ma'am," answered the good woman; "and if he don't find it to his taste, he has become wonderfully hard to please."

"That is what I fear," said Mrs. Leeson. "You know, Robert is a little wild, Boget: if we do not make his home agreeable, he will be running out night after night, as he used to, and break my poor heart," she added, with sadness.

"Oh, ma'am! our boy has grown older and wiser, I trust. Well, if we can't manage him, we will send him over to a pretty lady, who *has* some influence over him," said the seamstress, who was no stranger to Robert's unbounded admiration for his cousin.

While this little domestic confab was going on between the kind mistress and the faithful servant, Helen sat reading to Anna, who was laid up with neuralgic pains in her limbs. Six weeks had elapsed since the eventful proceedings which we have related had occurred, and many had been the bitter moments of anguish which Helen had suf-

fered. Unable to give her aunt a plausible excuse for refusing to accompany her, she was out night after night, dancing the whole evening, and straining all her physical strength to drive the dreadful vision from her mind; but, alas! with very little success. She was still the belle of the season, the most courted, the most admired—even by the young Englishman, who waited but a favourable opportunity to offer himself. This, however, fortunately for Helen, was put off to an indefinite period; for Lord Devere, being in ill health, determined to spend the remainder of the winter in Cuba; and both gentlemen left New York very unexpectedly.

This departure was an immense relief to the young girl, who hoped that time might bring a change in her fate, which she scarcely dared to acknowledge to herself. As she had determined never to divulge the fatal secret, she could not sever the tie which bound her to *that man*, as she ever styled him when the subject was mentioned to Laura. What change, then, could occur to better Helen's prospects—to allow her to realize her fondest dream—to become Lady Courtnay? Death alone! And bitter as was the enmity she entertained toward the author of her misery, she scarcely dared reflect a moment upon such a result. As Laura had said, prayer was the only soother to her aching heart; gradually she became partially reconciled to the divine decree, and endeavoured to seek in study and intellectual pursuits an enjoyment which society no longer afforded her.

"Thank you, dearest!" said Anna, as she kissed the hand which was clasped in hers. "This sweet reading has done me good; and had I not neglected an imperative duty to-day; I should be quite satisfied with my prospects for the afternoon."

"What duty do you allude to, darling?" said her sister. "Is it any thing I can do for you?"

"Well, yes, you might; but then it would annoy you, I am afraid: you are not accustomed to such close contact with the sufferings of this world as I am," said Anna, gently.

"It is high time I should be, then. Now tell me, Puss, what you would desire me to do for you. To go and see some of your pensioners?" added Helen, smiling.

"Yes," said Anna, "a poor old woman whom I visit every Thursday; she always expects me, and seems so delighted when I go there; she lives a few squares from here, on the other side of the Sixth Avenue. Sophie knows—she has been there."

"I will go at once," said Helen, as she rang the bell, and bid the maid bring her bonnet and cloak.

"You will find a basket in the closet, Elly, which I prepared for old Jane; Sophie can carry it. Tell her why I did not go myself, and that Doctor Clifford thinks camphorated oil would do her rheumatism a great deal of good," said Anna.

"I will try to remember all that," answered Helen, as she kissed her sister; and stopping a moment to tell Mrs. Leeson that Anna was alone, she started on her mission of charity.

The old woman in whom the lame girl took such an interest lived in a modest, but neat-looking house in Fifteenth Street, near the North River; and as Helen took her silent way, followed by Sophie, she noticed the many forlorn, miserable dwellings which abound in that part of the city, and through which the kind child had gone in search of a suffering one to comfort and relieve.

"Are you Jane Kelly?" inquired Helen, as she entered

the little room, which seemed to contain every necessary of life, but not one luxury. This was addressed to a very elderly person, who sat in a wooden arm-chair, nicely cushioned by Anna's judicious charity.

"I am, ma'am," replied the old woman.

"My sister, Miss Leeson," added Helen, "has requested me to visit you to-day. She is indisposed, and unable to come herself. Here are some provisions which she sends you." So saying, she took the chair which was offered by a girl of fourteen, who seemed to be waiting upon Anna's protégé.

"Is the dear young lady ill? I hope she will soon get well, for I could not live long without her sweet visits. I have but two joys in this world," continued old Jane—"Miss Anna's good care, and the blessing of seeing my young master now and then."

"Have you no one on whom you can depend?" said Helen, who felt it her duty to entertain the afflicted one, so deprived of earthly treasures.

"Yes," she answered; "my young master supports me—poor, dear boy! I lived with his mother when he was born, and better, kinder people than his parents never existed. They were rich, very rich, then; but trouble came afterward, and pursued them for many years. They were so poor, that my mistress and I were obliged to do all the work. She was delicate, and it broke her down completely. At last she died. Oh! that was a sad day. I thought my poor master and my dear boy would have gone crazy. And so poor, that they had to sell the silver to pay for her funeral. I never shall forget the cold, dismal weather when they carried her away, and the wretched man followed her to the grave!" The old woman wept bitterly; Helen's eyes were filled with tears.

"Go on!" she said.

"Well, I stayed with master for some time—as long as I could. My health was very bad, but I hated to leave my boy, who was the best child in the world. Many an evening has he spent reading to me when I was losing my sight, and even now he comes to see me very often. We have quite a nice place here; have we not? This room is very comfortable; and then there is a little closet, with a window on that side, where Peggy keeps her flowers. Show your roses to the lady, Peggy; you know Miss Anna always goes in to see them."

Astonished at the truly satisfied spirit of the poor woman, and anxious to gratify her, Helen rose and went into the adjoining room.

At that moment the bell rang; and leaving the visitor to examine the flowers, Peggy ran to open the door, exclaiming, "It is Mr. Walter, grandmother!"

Helen started, and stood motionless, not losing one word of the conversation. It was *he*—there, near her; she could not mistake the voice which years would not obliterate from her memory!

"Well, Jany! how are you?" said the young man. "Here is your money: had you enough last month? You must not want any thing, you know; I won't hear to that."

"Lors! Mr. Walter, I am quite comfortable. But won't you take a seat? you always sit a while."

"Not to-day, Jany. I have business to attend to, and I came up from the office to bring you your money."

"You have been sick, my son," said the old woman, anxiously; "you look very badly, now I have my spectacles on."

"I *have* had trouble," sighed the young man—"the worst kind of trouble. Pray for me; you know mother

made you promise you would. *I* have prayed," he added, "but the sorrow is still here—in this poor, broken heart. Oh! Jany, I am wretched!" For an instant the voice faltered. "No matter," he added; "it will soon be over, I trust. I am arranging my business for a trip to Europe, in a few months; but I will leave your income in safe hands. Now, good-by; I'll come soon again;" and the door closed, and all was silent.

Words cannot express Helen's sensations, as she listened to that short conversation. Did not a feeling of pity temper the bitterness of her hatred toward Walter? No! Pride was yet unconquered, and no dawn of mercy could reach her heart.

She returned to the old woman, nervous and agitated.

"I am sorry you did not come in to see my young master; he is so good, so kind-hearted! But he said he was wretched; what can ail him?" added old Jane, little dreaming that the cause of his agony stood there before her.

"Have you any message for my sister, Mrs. Kelly?" asked Helen.

"My best respects and thanks, and hope she will soon get well. Peggy, open the door for the young lady. Thank you for your kind visit, Miss Leeson, but I am right sorry you did not see my boy."

Helen hurried down stairs with Sophie, who could not account for the excited manner of her young mistress. As they were leaving the house, they heard the extras; and as Helen reached her father's door, a carriage drove up, a loved face peeped out, and in two minutes more the young girl entered the drawing-room with Robert, who had folded her to his bosom.

Great was the joy in the family that night. Aunt Seraph and Laura were there; Herman Smith, who had come up

with Robert, stayed to dinnner, of course. In the evening, the parlour door was gently opened, and a silvery little voice inquired—

"May I offer my neighbourly welcome to the traveller?"

"Alice Irving!" exclaimed Robert, as he rose and offered both hands to the friendly shake of the little Quakeress.

Even Mr. Leeson's stiff features seemed to yield to the blessed influence of affection; he spent the evening at home, and only once showed a little irritation at the tea being served up at the wrong moment, just as his son was entertaining the family by a graphic description of his travels. We have said that Robert's education had been greatly neglected, but he was naturally witty, and no one could tell a better story than he.

"How did you manage to get along so well without speaking French or German?" asked Anna, who had been carried down and lay on the sofa, a most delighted listener.

"Well, I had to contrive; for instance, in Germany, I wanted to start at a certain hour by the cars, and could not make the driver understand me. I had but a few moments to reach the depot; at last, pushed to my wit's ends, I imitated the sound of steam and the steam-whistle; the fellow understood me, and bore me along like lightning, just in time to take my seat in the cars, which were starting."

"That was smart!" said Alice, laughing. "Nice fun this, being obliged to have recourse to such expedients to travel through Europe. I suppose you enjoyed Paris very much; did you not?"

"Beyond description. There is no place like it in this wide world; one can live more independently, more according to one's means there, than anywhere else, and without

fearing the criticism or notice of an earthly being. Such a treat!"

"Well, I don't know," responded Alice; "I think a little gossip now and then very amusing. But Aunt Martha always complains of it; she says, in New York, people are more busy with the affairs of their neighbours than with their own."

"You might suggest her going to live in Paris," said Herman, laughing.

"That is an excellent notion, to which, however, there would be a great objection. Aunt Martha never could make up her mind to cross the ocean; she has a perfect dread of water, and examines her will every time she goes to Brooklyn."

"Did you see many fine paintings abroad, Robert?" asked Miss Marsy.

"A great many; I visited all the galleries in Paris. But the finest I saw were in Rome and Naples."

"You must have been delighted with the scenery in Switzerland," added Aunt Seraph, noticing the painful change which the mention of Italy had produced on Laura's countenance.

"I could not possibly describe it," answered the young man. "How you would all enjoy it! Even mother, who is not fond of locomotion, would take great pleasure in a trip to Europe."

"I doubt it, my dear boy," said Mrs. Leeson. "But I hope Helen and Laura will go next fall. Seraphina," she added, turning to her sister, "you will have to matronize them."

"Well, I am rather old for such expeditions, but wherever these children go, I am willing to be one of them," said the kind friend.

"Now that you have cross-questioned me, let us know

what is going on here. Any beaux in the way, Helen?" asked Robert.

The young girl, still under the effects of the painful impressions of the morning, had been very silent during that cosy family-meeting. Thus appealed to, however, she blushed and said, "No, indeed."

"Don't believe her," cried Alice Irving.

"She has made a most brilliant conquest; and were it not for Lord Devere's gout, you would have found this lady engaged to Sir Archibald Courtnay."

"Ah! well, that is fine; but what sort of a person is this English nobleman," asked Robert. "I am not over partial to John Bull."

"A very insignificant sort of a person," said Laura, who felt that her cousin needed an auxiliary.

"Not half as agreeable as his old gouty uncle."

"You are fastidious, Laura," said Mr. Leeson. "Helen may not thank you for that opinion, one of these days."

"What! is it really a serious affair?" inquired Robert. "Is it true, Elly? come, tell me about it."

"I cannot marry Sir Archibald," she replied, with a sigh.

"We will find a nice Yankee for you, Elly," said Alice. "I would not have an Englishman."

"Too green, Miss Alice," said Mr. Grantly, who was entering the parlour, and had overheard the remark. Robert, my boy, welcome home!" he added, shaking hands with his nephew.

"How are you, sir? and where is aunt? I should have gone up to see you, but mother assured me you would be down here this evening."

"Yes, I depended upon Amanda; but, as usual, she is off among the fashionables—gone to the opera with the Elvingtons. Well, Robert, tell me something about your proceed-

ings during the last six months. You look very foreign: all the girls will be winking at you."

Young Lecson repeated many of the details he had already related to the other members of his family. All were much entertained, and eleven o'clock came around before they were aware of it.

"Mercy!" exclaimed Alice Irving; "I must be off! Mother will scold me, unless the traveller comes in to-morrow to plead my cause," she added, smiling.

"I will do that, immediately," responded the young man, preparing to accompany the young girl.

"Good-night, all!" said Aunt Seraph, as she made her exit, after reminding the family circle that she expected them the next day to dinner.

"I should be most happy to see you and Mrs. Grantly also," she added, turning to Mr. Grantly.

"Nothing could give me more pleasure, my dear madam, but I cannot promise, as my wife has engagements for every day this week," replied the old gentleman. "I get so tired of this restless life!"

"Don't forget that Thursday is my day," interrupted Alice, who stood cloaked and hooded, chattering with Helen and Laura. "You know Aunt Martha is to be absent; otherwise I should not dare have a party, small as it will be. Good-night!"

How truly thankful was the fond mother, as she led her son up stairs to his newly-furnished room! and how comfortable it appeared to the traveller, who had been tossed about from hotel to hotel for so many days!

"Home, sweet home!" he murmured, as he kissed his mother.

CHAPTER IX.

HAVE not our readers a slight curiosity to become acquainted with the family of merry little Alice? Let us step in next door, and take a seat in Mrs. Irving's plain but very neat parlour, so different from the magnificence which reigns on the other side of that party-wall. Then we must peep into the dining-room, where the family is at breakfast; a most inviting meal will induce us to accept the seat ever ready for a visitor at Friend Irving's table.

The whole appearance of the establishment was very Quakerish; but with the exception of Alice's father and his widowed sister, Mrs. Martha Walker, the genuine weathers of the "Paddy squeezers" would have found little sympathy among the inmates of that comfortable mansion.

Mrs. Irving was an Episcopalian. A young girl from Connecticut, she had met Samuel Irving, then a very handsome fellow, at a sociable tea-party, and had willingly consented to become his wife, with the prospect of living in a fine house in New York. Mrs. Irving was sincerely attached to her husband; and consequently gradually conformed to his quiet and simple tastes, entirely unmindful of the worldly dreams which she had so frequently indulged in during the few years of dissipation which preceded her marriage. Besides which, a very large family would, at all events, have compelled the worthy lady to limit her enjoyments to her domestic resources.

Mrs. Walker had not approved of what she called her

brother's rash marriage, and was much distressed at his being thus united to a member of a sect which she considered worldly beyond redemption. However, as the leading trait of Aunt Martha's character was genuine kindness of feeling, and as she saw her young and very good-looking sister-in-law adopt the ways of her husband, and make his home a very happy one, she gradually relented; so much so, that when she became a widow, she accepted her brother's offer to come and live with him; and the intercourse between the two sisters had ever been most satisfactory to both.

Mrs. Walker was wealthy; her husband had left her a very considerable fortune, with which she joyfully assisted her brother, whose numerous charges were gradually rendering an increase of income of vital importance to him. The remainder of her means the kind Quakeress devoted to deeds of mercy. She was a philanthropist of that noble kind who, like angels on earth, apply all the energies of their minds to the relief of the afflicted. Day after day, the devoted woman visited the poor, the sick—those who never utter a murmur, but whose sufferings are by far the most acute. Mrs. Walker knew them all; and many a tear had fallen on the smiling lip as words of comfort and solid benefit marked the entrance of their best friend.

Many authors have portrayed the errors of the wealthy: their selfish extravagance, their cold indifference to the pitiful cry of their fellow-beings. Alas! there are such in this sad world; and 'tis well that now and then a glance at that literary mirror which we call *novels* should reflect their fatal weaknesses, and point out the morbid state of their moral self. But while these dark shades in the picture of humanity are thus drawn by an artist's hand, great should be the care to bring forth the brilliant lights

of love and charity which God, in his mercy, has allowed to dawn upon us. Otherwise, what will be the consequence? The poor—that portion of humanity so sorely tried, and therefore so ready to throw an odium upon their more favoured brethren—the poor will entertain but a feeling of bitter enmity toward the wealthy, whom they consider unjustly blessed and ever ready to oppress them. Many and sad have been the effects of the excitement thus produced upon the masses by injudicious writers!

Let us try to communicate to our readers, rich and poor, a blessed feeling of love and protection on the one side, and love and confidence on the other. God has so framed society that equality is an impossible aim. All attempts to reach it have been unavailing, except in matters of government. Let us then be thankful for the enjoyment of that desired object as regards our civil rights, and submit, with friendly feeling toward all, to the fate which Providence has chosen to assign to us.

Mrs. Walker, notwithstanding her many virtues, was not faultless; she was unreasonably prejudiced against society and its votaries. In her eyes, a ball was a monstrous assemblage of wickedness and iniquity; no salvation possible for those who mixed with the followers of fashion; and she was indefatigable in her endeavours to correct the very evident inclination of her niece for the amusements of the gay. As is generally the case, instead of producing the desired effect upon Alice, her aunt's sermons only tended to increase her taste for the intercourse of her more worldly and more indulgent friends; and although hers was one of those bright, cheerful natures which no domestic annoyance can disturb, still Alice was a shade happier when Aunt Martha was away.

For a long time the young girl had been anxious to re-

ceive a few friends—the Leesons and five or six others; but she had never dared express her wish in her aunt's presence. It so happened that Mrs. Walker had gone to Elizabethtown to spend a week with a poor friend of hers who had just lost a child, and was in very delicate health. "Now," thought Alice, "is the time;" and with very little persuasion she obtained from her mother the wished-for permission.

"How nicely the parlours look, this evening!" said the young girl, as she tripped about, arranging the furniture in the most advantageous manner, and placing two beautiful bouquets in a conspicuous situation.

"Yes," said Mrs. Irving, sighing; "this reminds me of my young days. I wish we could now and then see a little company, for really one gets tired, sometimes, of Friend Barker and his wife Sally. What a pity your father objects so much to our receiving! I think he would enjoy it."

"Oh! I would not mind pa!" said Alice. "Aunt Martha is the great opponent I have to contend with. I wonder if aunty was ever young?" she added, laughing at her notion.

"I should think so," said Mrs. Irving. "By-the-by, who do you expect to-night, Alice?"

"Well, let me see! We shall be twelve, altogether; just enough to set down comfortably at the tea-table and enjoy old Susan's hot cakes. I invited Helen and Robert, Laura and Aunt Seraph, who promised to come; can't be quite sure of those, for Laura is so dull. My! the idea of mourning two years for one's husband! I should be distressed to think that any man could obtain so many tears from me! Now, Laura would suit Aunt Martha to a T."

"Come, come, Alice!" interrupted her mother; "don't talk so much, and tell me who your guests are, this evening."

"I will tell you, if you promise not to scold. I asked the Warrens, Emma Grantly, Herman Smith, Allan Dorsay, and Harry Marvell."

"Is that all?" said Mrs. Irving. "Why should I scold about those you mention? I know they are intimate with our good neighbours next door."

"But that is not *quite* all," said Alice, with an arch look. "I met Mr. Marvell, this morning, in Broadway. He stopped me to say that, if perfectly agreeable to me, he would introduce a charming young Scotchman to us, this evening; and as I could not say no, why, I said yes!"

"Mr. Marvell is a great busybody!" said Mrs. Irving. "The strange gentleman will think there is a party here; and if your aunt hears of it we will all get scolded."

"What is the use of anticipating evil?" responded Alice, as she caught a glimpse of her pretty self in a mite of a looking-glass which, by her especial desire, had been allowed to remain in one corner of the Quaker parlour.

The bell rang, and as Helen had promised to come early, Alice went out to receive her friend. But it was Miss Marsy and Laura, who had made a great effort to gratify her aunt. Miss Seraphina was borne down by the weight of her elegant dress and elaborately trimmed cap—all *too* fine, she thought; but having been brought from Paris by Robert, she considered herself in duty bound to wear them on this occasion; perhaps the only one which would offer itself that winter. Laura, as usual, wore a black silk dress and a black lace collar. Many would have thought that coquetry induced the young countess to keep on that mourner's dress, which, with her light hair, was so very becoming. But far different was her motive. To please her aunt, she consented to change her bombazine for a silk, but declared that she never would put on even a coloured ribbon;

and the family had finally given up the hope of seeing a change in the young widow's dress. The splendid shawl which Robert had brought was laid aside until some favourable opportunity would offer of presenting it to a friend.

"I am so happy to see you, Miss Marsy!" said Mrs. Irving, as she gave her guest a comfortable arm-chair. "How are you, my dear countess?" Like all persons who seldom mix with the worldly, Mrs. Irving was delighted with every little tinge of grandeur, and would not have omitted Laura's title on any account.

"What beautiful flowers!" remarked Aunt Seraph. "May I ask where they are from?"

"Oh! a very innocent source. Anna Leeson sent me this one, and Emma Grantly the other. You see my admirers won't quarrel about my favours!"

"So much the better, Alice," said Laura, as she sat near the fire.

"There is Helen! I know Robert's ring!" exclaimed Miss Irving. "Good-evening, neighbours; you are so late and fashionable; that won't do for a Quaker tea-party!"

Helen seemed more cheerful than usual. Robert's return had diverted her mind from its anxious meditations, and she quite enjoyed the prospect of a cosy tea-party among her dearest friends.

Robert, of course, was in fine spirits; Laura was there. For the first time since her husband's death, the young countess had consented to appear in so large a circle, and the lover augured well of this favourable change. He little knew how unchanged the heart was!

Emma Grantly and the Warrens came in, and, shortly after, Herman Smith and Allan Dorsay. The conversation was very animated, and Mrs. Irving was enchanted with this reminiscence of her young days.

"How did you like the Elvington party, Miss Emma?" inquired Allan Dorsay.

"Pretty well: it was so crowded we could scarcely dance. I am getting very tired of those large balls. Ah! here is Mr. Marvell," added Emma, blushing. The blush was addressed to our friend Mac Tavish, who followed Marvell, and made a most gracious bow to Mrs. Irving and her daughter.

"I am very happy to see you, sir," said the lady; "but fear Mr. Marvell has taken a great responsibility in inviting you to spend the evening with such quiet people as we are."

"Indeed, you wrong yourself, madam; I am fully aware of the many intellectual resources possessed by the ladies of your family. Have I the honour of seeing Mrs. Walker, the friend of the afflicted?" added the unlucky Mac Tavish, addressing Aunt Seraph.

"I cannot aspire to so noble a title," said Miss Marsy, with a smile.

"Miss Marsy—Mr. Mac Tavish; Miss Leeson's aunt," said Alice, who could scarcely refrain from laughing. "Let me introduce you to the Countess Marini."

The gentleman bowed low to the beautiful widow, and was about to make some very flattering remark, when his eye met a sharp glance from Robert, who had an instinctive dread of all foreigners. However, he soon found that there was nothing to fear in that quarter, and was much pleased with the easy manners of the young Scotchman.

As usual, Marvell managed to make himself very agreeable; he was the most elastic being of this caoutchouc age. He knew how to draw up his figure to suit the dignified style of Grantly Hall; and, with equal facility, he could conform his conversation and manners to the simple

tastes of the Quaker family; and before the evening was over, the kind hostess had reason to regret the uncharitable epithet which she had applied to the gentleman of fashion. Even Miss Marsy was amused by some of Marvell's anecdotes, and a description of Mac Tavish's travels.

"Why don't you play charades?" asked Robert. "I saw some in Paris, which were got up on the spur of the moment, beautifully played, and one of the most agreeable entertainments I ever witnessed."

"That would be delightful!" said Alice. "How is it done, Robert? Can you direct us?"

"Perfectly; it is very easy. You prepare a sort of a stage, and use the folding-doors instead of a curtain; then you select a word, which you represent; that is, dividing it by syllables, and the audience must guess it. It is capital fun."

"I should think so. Well, supposing we try some?" said Miss Irving.

"Alice, my dear, I am afraid the noise might disturb your father, who is not very well," interrupted Mrs. Irving, alarmed at the idea of allowing a performance of any kind in her house.

"Yes," said Emma. "Let us put it off to another time, Mr. Smith," she added, to Herman, who was leaning over her chair, looking at an album which she was examining. "Why were you not at aunt's ball, some weeks ago? and why do you never go anywhere?"

"Because I take no pleasure in such amusements," answered Herman, "and am not missed by any one."

"How modest! but not exactly sincere, I think," said the young girl, as she looked up at her companion with one of those gracious smiles which have often rivalled true beauty.

"Well, if I knew that one single friend thought of me in the midst of that whirlpool of fashion and splendour, I might not go out more often; but I would be very much flattered," said Herman.

"You *are* missed—often missed. Now, that is quite enough to feed your vanity for one night," added Miss Grantly, in a playful tone, fearing that she might have said rather too much, and leaving the young man in uncertainty regarding the seriousness of her remarks.

"I have made two or three most agreeable acquaintances of late," continued Emma. "Have you heard of Professor Amory, who has been lecturing here on philosophy. He was introduced to me at the Coverleys last week; and that same evening I had a most delightful talk with M. de Cerny, a French naturalist, who is on a scientific tour in this country. Nothing can be more entertaining and fascinating than his conversation. Mamma has invited these gentlemen to a small literary party; will you not come also? It would give me great pleasure to see you."

"I cannot refuse such an invitation from you, Miss Emma," was the answer.

While this conversation was going on in one corner of the drawing-room, merry peals of laughter sounded from the opposite direction, where sat the Warrens, Miss Emily, and her sister Delia, a consummate flirt, who was making the very best of her advantages to captivate Marvell and Mac Tavish—both fully aware of the danger to which they were exposed. Alice was receiving sundry compliments from Allan Dorsay, who did not attempt to conceal the admiration he felt for the pretty little Quakeress. Helen and Robert had joined the more quiet coterie composed of Aunt Seraph, Laura, and Mrs. Irving. All

seemed quite satisfied with the lot which chance had assigned to them, except Mac Tavish, who now and then looked at Herman as though he would have annihilated his unconscious rival.

Mrs. Irving left the room. A few moments after, the folding-doors were opened, and a servant-girl came forward with a grin, announcing that "tea was ready; please to walk in."

The young people were quite ready to appreciate the many delicacies which were set before them—a real Quaker tea-table, loaded with hot cakes, relishes of all kinds, and most delicious coffee. Mac Tavish, who happened to be seated between Emma and Alice, enjoyed the repast exceedingly; but as he looked around at the merry guests, he could not imagine where the sensible woman was whom Marvell had announced to him. Laura, not being very well, had gone in to spend the remainder of the evening with Mrs. Leeson.

Great was the satisfaction of Alice as she surveyed her guests; it was so delightful to have a party at home! But the poor child's joy was not of long duration. While merry jokes from Marvell and Robert called forth peals of laughter from the party, the door opened, and Aunt Martha stood before them.

The ghost of Banquo appearing to Macbeth could not have inspired more consternation to the guilty man's breast, than did this unexpected apparition to the conscience-stricken mother and daughter. However, Mrs. Walker was too much of a lady to allow her astonishment and dissatisfaction to betray themselves upon her countenance. She smiled and said, as the young men rose to offer her a seat, "Pray, be seated, gentlemen. I came home very unexpectedly; but I have had tea, and am going up to my

room immediately. Good-evening; I hope I have not disturbed you."

"Well!" exclaimed Alice, half vexed and half amused, as her mother followed Mrs. Walker out of the room, "if this is not too bad!" Then, perceiving she had made a silly speech, she added, "I can't bear the idea of not having had aunt to tea with us—she would have enjoyed it so much."

The party adjourned to the drawing-room, after having duly tested the bountiful hospitality offered by Mrs. Irving. But there seemed to be much less spirit among the young people than before Aunt Martha had made her appearance. The fact was, that Alice had her misgivings about the consequences of her act of independence, particularly as she had intended coaxing her aunt into the purchase of a valuable muff which she had set her mind upon. Mrs. Walker was extremely generous, but her niece felt that, as matters stood, her fingers would certainly freeze that winter.

Soon after, the company retired, and with a heavy heart and tearful eyes, the usually cheerful girl went up to her modest bed-room, dreading the censure which the morrow would bring. Mrs. Walker's judgment was at fault there. Indulgence toward the young, toward all—here is the secret of positive and beneficial influence!

CHAPTER X.

As the poor mother had feared, Robert Leeson had scarcely been home a few weeks, when he fell in with all his old associates, and resumed his former habits of idleness and dissipation.

This was most distressing to Mrs. Leeson, who remonstrated in vain with her son, and night after night lay awake until she heard his footstep on the stairs. How many mothers have done the same, alas!

Boget, who considered herself fully authorized to take a prominent part in any thing which concerned *her children*, attempted a little *ruse de guerre* to correct the misled young man. For several nights she sat up for him; and as she opened the door at a very late hour, she gently reprimanded her boy, as she called him, and even stopped in his room to say that his conduct was disgraceful, and that he would break his mother's heart.

"There is no use talking this way, Boget, and waiting up for me; I am young, and must sow my wild oats. You and mother take a wrong view of the matter. Would you make an old, settled-down fellow of me? Nonsense!"

"Nonsense, Mr. Robert!" rejoined the good woman; "you are not out at this hour for any good purpose; ten to one you spend your money playing cards."

"Well, if I do. Don't father pass all his evenings at the club? and has not mother been miserable for years? When I get a wife, I won't do so."

"You are like all wicked people," answered Boget; "glad enough to throw the responsibility of your errors on others. Good-night, Mr. Robert! Do as you please, but remember what I tell you: she never will smile upon you, if you behave in this way."

"She never will, at any rate," said the young man, as the door closed upon the friend of his childhood.

Helen attempted to prevail upon her brother to change his habits, but without success. She was devotedly attached to him, and thought long and earnestly of the means of reclaiming him. She saw but one plan to adopt, and that was, to have company at home, and go out with the young man as often as possible. The former object was not easy to accomplish, as Mr. Leeson had complained a great deal lately of bad business and the extravagance of his family.

Helen was too proud to receive politeness from her large circle of acquaintances without returning it, and that winter they had had but one small party.

Mrs. Grantly, who was most punctilious in matters of etiquette, had told her brother several times that he could not possibly avoid giving a ball; that Helen's establishment depended upon it.

"I cannot do it, Amanda," responded Mr. Leeson to the reiterated arguments of his sister. "Business is unusually bad this winter; it would be a great piece of folly."

"How silly in you to talk so!" said the worldly woman. "What will people say, seeing Miss Leeson, the daughter of the rich Robert Leeson, go out, night after night, and never receive her friends? That will injure your credit more than the thousand dollars a ball will cost you. You will lose your position in society; and I value that above every thing," added Mrs. Grantly.

And Mr. Leeson, who ever gave up to his sister's arguments, probably because she was a more fascinating personification of his own proud self, told his wife that invitations must be sent out for a ball, to be given in two weeks in great style. And while the apparently wealthy man was making a display of his fictitious thousands, the bills of his household were left unpaid. Alas! how many brilliant entertainments have been given under the same circumstances!

Two or three days before the ball, Helen received a note from her aunt, requesting her to go to the opera with her. She was extravagantly fond of music. Many a pleasant evening had she spent with Anna at the piano; and, in her present state of mind, the prospect of a few hours' audition of Bosio's delightful voice was most grateful. Mrs. Grantly called for her niece at the appointed time, and a few moments afterward Helen was comfortably seated in her aunt's box.

Many have been the regrets felt and expressed by the lovers of music at the non-success of that beautiful little opera-house in Astor Place. Such an agreeable resort for our young men—such a positive security against their seeking amusement elsewhere! There was an atmosphere of elegance and refinement about it, which, added to the beauty and toilets of the ladies, made its attractions irresistible, and greatly contributed to improve the tastes and manners of the younger members of our community; in fact, kept many older ones from the less-refining seductions of the club.

"Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast."

From ages immemorial its effects upon the wildest, sternest passions of man have been evident, and the improvement

in the musical taste of a nation is a sure test of its increasing civilization. Would it not be desirable, then, that measures should be taken to afford our young people a permanent opportunity of improving their knowledge of a science which can but produce a beneficial effect upon all?

Helen listened with delight to the sweet strains of Bosio, in the first act of Lucia; and as she witnessed the constrained marriage of the young Scotch lady, the strange circumstances of her own mysterious union flashed across her mind.

The curtain dropped; she took up her opera-glass and mechanically directed it toward the private boxes. There, in the darkest corner of one of them, sat a figure which Helen could not mistake; it was *he*—*he* again!

An icy feeling closed around the young girl's heart as she hastily withdrew the glass, which for an instant had been riveted upon that box.

"How were you pleased, Miss Leeson?" asked Sydney Morris, taking a seat behind the ladies. "Is not this most exquisite?—such acting, such singing! One could almost fancy oneself in Paris!" Sydney Morris had never been there, but he delighted in the idea of having it supposed he had visited that great capital.

"I enjoyed the music exceedingly, Mr. Morris," replied Helen; "but the heat is intense!"

"Will you take a walk over to Mrs. Elvington's box, Elly?" said Robert.

"No, I would rather not. Emma, do tell me, who is that fine-looking man in the parquette, on the right?"

"Oh! that is M. de Cerny, my scientific friend. I see he has recognised me, and will probably make us a visit," added Emma.

A few minutes after a slight knock was heard.

"Good-evening, M. de Cerny," said Miss Grantly, as she rose. "Allow me to introduce you to my aunt, Mrs. Grantly; Miss Leeson."

"I am most happy," said the gentleman, "mademoiselle, to meet you here this evening, for I have very few acquaintances in New York."

"Do you intend making a long stay in our country?" asked Mrs. Grantly, quite pleased with the very aristocratic appearance of Emma's French acquaintance.

"Several months, madame," rejoined the stranger, in very pure English. "I have just returned from Niagara; and no expressions can describe the magnificence of the scenery around the Falls, in this season. The reflection of the sun's rays on that mass of ice produces a magical effect. I have been delighted with my visit here, so far; and this evening," he added, smiling, "one must be fastidious indeed not to be charmed by such an assembly of beauty and elegance. The American ladies bear the palm for loveliness, most certainly."

"I am happy to hear you say so," responded Mrs. Grantly, as though she were entitled to a portion of the compliment. "Are you acquainted with Miss Dalton—Miss Olivia Coverley, M. de Cerny?"

"I have not that honour, madame; but Miss Grantly has been kind enough to invite me to meet some of these ladies at her house," answered the gentleman.

"Yes, aunt, we are to have a real treat—a literary soirée —next week—"

"I should think," interrupted the fine lady, "that M. de Cerny had quite enough of those pursuits, without annoying him with the same subject during his leisure hours."

"Oh! no, indeed! I anticipate great pleasure in conversing with Professor Amory and other scientific gentle-

men, whom I have met once or twice. You know there is a kindred feeling among the students of this world—a free-masonry—which is very attractive, I assure you."

The curtain was about to rise, and M. de Cerny made his exit.

"A very agreeable and genteel person," said Mrs. Grantly, who, to tell the truth, had found the foreigner rather too deep for her superficial knowledge.

Helen had not taken the least part in the above conversation. Her thoughts were far distant from science, or even less profound topics. Her glance at the opposite private box had led her into a train of reminiscences which she could not drive from her mind. The whole of the strange proceedings of that terrible night stood before her, and then conjecture succeeded conjecture. Who could he be? How came he, whom she considered so far beneath her in social position, to be admitted into Mrs. Murray's box?

Helen knew that lady to be very particular in the selection of her acquaintances. *He* must, then, be a gentleman; probably a friend of Mr. George Murray, the only son of that genteel-looking old lady who is such an attentive listener to the exquisite music of Donizetti's masterpiece.

Mrs. Grantly and her niece were on visiting terms with Mrs. Murray, but nothing more. "That accounts for my not meeting *that man*," thought Helen. "Why did I not ask Jane Kelly his name?" and a look of deep concern settled on that beautiful countenance which had arrested many a gaze, elicited many an exclamation of admiration. That evening our heroine wore a remarkably becoming dress of pink gros-de-naples, with several flounces of tulle, low in the neck, and short sleeves. A simple wreath of blush roses formed Helen's head-dress. She had one of those Grecian profiles which such a coiffure becomes so well.

No jewels, no ornaments whatever. Nature would have rebelled against such an encroachment of art upon her rights.

Who can attempt to describe the feelings of the young man who sat in the darkest recess of Mrs. Murray's box? Words cannot express his tortures, his agony, as he gazed at the only light which had ever dawned upon his solitary and dismal fate; and that light, alas! surrounded by an impenetrable cloud.

We have seen very little of Walter, and already we almost know him. More merciful than Helen, we sympathize and pity the wretched youth whose lot has been so sad, and who, alas! loves so ardently and so despairingly. Deep, indeed, and strong is that passion, when it takes possession of a heart as pure, as untouched, as was that of Helen's husband!

"Yes!" he thought, every nerve racked by the violent beating of his heart—"yes, she is mine, my wife, my own; and I dare not speak one word to her; nay, dare not look at her! Oh! this cannot last! Death were a thousand times less cruel than that woman! And still, is she to blame? Oh! why was I born? Why did I ever see her?" and in the silent anguish of his despair Walter grasped, nay, almost tore, the crimson curtain behind which was enacting a tragedy quite as terrific as poor Lucy Ashton's ravings.

The second act was over, and Marvell made his appearance in Mrs. Grantly's box.

"Did you ever hear any thing to equal that singing?" inquired Harry; "so perfect? And I have been trying in vain to keep those Elvingtons and their beaux quiet. Such a want of decorum, all this chatting, while others are listening to the music!" added the young man, who was on very intimate terms with Mrs. Grantly and her nieces.

"In very bad taste!" said the queen of fashion. "But,"

she added, "those ladies are no judges of good music. Just hear Cora Dalton laugh; in such a small house as this, one should be more particular; every thing said rather loud can be overheard."

"What do you think of Mrs. Seyton's flirtation with Mr. Murray?" continued Marvell. "I believe the old bachelor is entrapped, this time. He has spent half of the evening in her box. His mother will not fancy such a daughter-in-law! I have just been over to see her, and found several of my old cronies there. She is such a favourite with the young men; so kind and indulgent, so intellectual! I would rather spend an hour with Mrs. Murray than with that noisy set over there."

"Harry Marvell," said Mrs. Grantly, "thou art becoming literary; take care! Having one scientific niece, I could not stand it if you became blue too. Don't, for mercy's sake!"

"You talk of Murray's marrying that beautiful creature, Marvell," said Robert, who had returned to his aunt's box, after a butterfly trip among the belles. "She is not fool enough to have him, with her advantages and wealth! *I* would not. Do you know, I can't bear that man? He was rude to me once, and I never shall forget it."

"How ridiculous, Robert!" said Helen. "Mr. Murray is your senior by twenty years, and your superior in every respect, my dear!"

"I don't think so; and, besides, I'll let him know, the very first opportunity I have, that Young America won't tolerate impertinence from any one, young or old!"

"Hush, Robert!" continued his sister. "I should be ashamed if any one heard you make such a speech! Mr. Marvell," she added, "I wish you would give this dear boy some of your refinement and good manners!"

"Impossible! Miss Helen. This generation is, I fear, beyond redemption! Excuse me, Mr. Leeson," continued Harry, laughing; "I beg your lordship's pardon. Speaking of lordships, reminds me that I had a long letter from Courtnay, who is sighing for New York. Lord Devere is much better, and both gentlemen will be back in a few weeks," added Marvell, with a peculiar wink at Mrs. Grantly, who smiled in a very knowing manner.

"Silence, please, Mr. Marvell; I want to hear Benedetti's aria," said Emma.

Helen thought of nothing but the young lord's return, and a sigh burst from her lips.

The last act of Lucia was admirably sung. Even the Coverleys and Elvingtons submitted to the powerful influence of those exquisite sounds.

As the ladies were leaving the box, Mr. Marvell offered his arm to Mrs. Grantly. Robert came forward to escort Emma, but Sydney Morris stepped up, and of course could not be refused. Helen took her brother's arm, and they followed the crowd.

As they were about going down stairs, Robert and his sister, who had been left some distance behind their party, came in very close contact with Mr. Murray and Mrs. Seyton. The former inadvertently trod on Robert's foot, and immediately apologized.

"Stupid fool!" said the young man, quite loud enough to be overheard by all.

"Was that addressed to me, sir?" inquired George Murray, as Mrs. Seyton, foreseeing something unpleasant, left her escort and joined one of her acquaintances.

"Yes, sir," answered young Leeson, in a very rude manner. "You did it on purpose; and it is not the first

time you have been impertinent to me," he added, with increasing anger.

"This is no place for such discussions, sir," replied Mr. Murray, very quietly; "if you will step into this saloon, I will listen to your strange remarks."

"Robert, for Heaven's sake!" exclaimed Helen, "are you deranged? Aunt is waiting for us; take me to the carriage."

"I cannot," answered the excited young man. "Here, Walter," he added, turning to a gentleman who was within a few steps of them, "do take charge of my sister. I have a few words to say to Mr. Murray. Elly, go with Mr. Grey; he is a friend of mine." And Robert left his sister standing alone, as he followed his antagonist into the saloon.

Terrified and almost fainting from violent emotion, Helen took the arm which Walter could not help offering. Not one word passed between them until they were within a few yards of the carriage.

"Do not be alarmed about your brother," said the young man, in a whisper. "I know Mr. Murray well, and will endeavour to arrange this affair."

"Who is that genteel-looking young man?" asked Emma Grantly, as her friend stepped into the carriage.

"One of Robert's acquaintances. I don't know him," was the answer.

A few moments after, Helen reached her father's door, and dismissing Sophie, she ran up to her room.

"What shall I do?" thought the young girl, as she burst into tears. "Robert will fight a duel with Mr. Murray—he will be killed! And *that man* there again in my way—always my tormentor! Oh! Lord! Who shall I consult! Who can save Robert!" And as the agitated

girl opened the window, that the night air might cool her feverish brain, she thought of the little Friend next door.

As the intimacy between the two young girls was very great, and as there were frequent opportunities of intercourse, Alice, ever ingenious when any merriment was in play, had contrived an easy means of communicating with her neighbours. She had tied a string from Helen's blind to hers, and from this string hung a bell. Many a time either of the young girls had jumped up from her work at the sound of the little tinkler, and many a chat had been borne by the morning or evening breeze from Helen's window to Alice's, and *vice versâ*.

It was eleven o'clock.

"She will be fast asleep," thought Robert's anxious sister, as she gazed at the shining moon, and thought how pure and serene was its light, compared to the dark gloom of her own heart. But grief is egotistical. Helen could endure that solitary agony no longer. She touched the string, and the noise of the little bell, gentle as it was, soon brought Alice Irving to the window.

"Were you asleep, Alice?" asked Helen. "I am really very sorry to disturb you at this hour."

"Don't mind that, dearest; I was not asleep. I rest very badly now," said the little Quakeress, with a sadness very unusual to her.

But Helen was too intent on her own cares to notice the shade in Alice's voice.

"I am in great trouble," she continued: "Robert has just had a quarrel at the opera with Mr. Murray; a ridiculous, foolish affair, which may turn out fatally for the poor boy. He never could fire a pistol in his life. Oh, Alice, the very thought makes me shudder! What shall I do?"

"I really don't know; but I will find out all about it. Why do you not write to Herman Smith?"

"Because several times of late he has attempted to reason with Robert upon his conduct, with very little success; in fact, I think there is a coolness between them. No one has any influence over the wild boy."

"Don't distress yourself, Elly; I will obtain a full account of the affair from a friend of mine who must have some knowledge of the matter, and to-morrow, by sundown, I will meet you here. Good-night; it is rather cold for my airy costume."

"Good-night," responded Helen; "a thousand thanks!" Both windows were closed; but it was long, long before sleep visited the pillow of either young girl. Helen's thoughts wandered over the occurrences of the evening; her singular meeting with Walter, whose name she had heard for the first time from her brother's lips; and strange to say, although circumstances had certainly contributed to raise him in her estimation that evening, as regarded his social position, still the same unconquerable aversion toward him filled her heart, and she mentally welcomed the vision of Sir Archibald, his admiration, his devotion, with delight. And why did not Alice Irving rest quietly that night? Reader, patience is a virtue, they say. Let us practice it for a little while longer.

CHAPTER XI.

'RIDICULOUS! absurd!" said Mrs. Grantly to her husband, as they sat at breakfast on the morning subsequent to the performance of La Lucia. "How can you talk so, Mr. Grantly? I don't believe a word of it.'

"Very well, just as you like; but I tell you, Amanda, that it is nonsense in your brother to live as he does. A man in business never knows what he is worth; and I have my doubts about Robert's being so wealthy. He is the more to blame," continued Mr. Grantly, "that all this extravagance is his own suggestion—or rather yours, perhaps!" The last few words were said very softly, the worthy man almost regretting he had uttered them at all.

"Indeed, you think so?" said the lady of fashion, in a home key very different from that she generally used in company. "Well, I can tell you, that were it not for my brother, who is a man of some energy and spirit, the whole of that establishment would not be worth a fig: even Helen is becoming serious and pious; and surely you don't call Anna and her mother anybody!"

"I think very highly of Mrs. Leeson, Amanda; she is a genuine, kind, and gentle woman, and in the sphere we live in those charitable, indulgent natures are not very common. I am heartily tired of this constant criticism and interference which one meets at every step."

"Oh! you were no more fitted to occupy your present rank in society than I to become a queen; in fact, not half

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so much so," continued the lady, as she left the table and walked off with a would-be-majestic gait.

"Well, well!" soliloquized the husband, "give me such a wife as poor Matilda, and I shall be satisfied. Oh! why were not our fates reversed?" sighed the wearied man. Alas! Mr. Grantly knew not how much more wise Providence has been in assigning to each of us a path in which we are destined to relieve or be relieved! Blessed provision! which renders humanity ever dependent upon itself, and restores to society that equilibrium without which it could not exist.

"Perhaps he may be right," thought her majesty of fashion, as she gave herself up entirely to the superior knowledge of her maid, Mademoiselle Henriette, in the petty details of her elaborate toilet. "The more reason, then, for hurrying matters and getting a rich husband for Helen. But what ails the girl? I can't make her out, of late."

"Have you ordered the carriage, Henriette, for twelve o'clock, exactly?" asked Mrs. Grantly.

"Yes, madam; shall I give you de pink bonnet or de white one? Is madam going to visit or shop?" asked the French woman, whose early education had taught her the distinction which American ladies do not always consider.

"Both; that is of no consequence here. I am going visiting with Miss Leeson, and then I will drive down to Stewart's to make some purchases."

"Pas possible, that madam will wear dis beautiful dress to go in a store, nasty, dirty!" added the maid with comical astonishment. What would Henriette have said could she have seen the many magnificent dresses trailing in Broadway every afternoon?—so much wanton extravagance and bad taste!

"Now I am quite ready," said Mrs. Grantly, as she stood fully arrayed in the last hints of fashion. "How do I look, Henriette?"

"Very well, madam, to call to see de ladies, but not to go to stores," persisted the maid.

Helen was not prepared for her aunt's visit. She had risen with a heavy heart, little disposed to mix with the gay, and anxious for the afternoon, which would bring her friend to the promised window, *rendezvous*.

Anna, whose regular, unagitated life was a stranger to the violent excitement which now racked poor Helen's heart, could not account for the restless nervousness which her sister evinced at times, and particularly that morning.

"What shall I do?" said Helen, as she sat in Anna's room, unable to make the slightest exertion. "Time hangs so heavily upon me this morning."

"Play, sing, read, work," replied the little lame girl, as she arranged her flowers; and plucking a sweet rosebud, she placed it in her sister's hair; then running for a looking-glass, she stood before her, saying—

"Now admire yourself, if you won't do any thing else; that is really becoming."

"Don't put rose-buds in my hair, Anna; let the happy chosen ones wear the pride of our gardens."

"What! not accept my foolish flower? Nay, then I am indeed unblessed!" said Anna, smiling. "Now, dearest, I give you this, the first bud I have had for several weeks; promise me to wear it all day, will you?"

"Of course, if you wish it; but I assure you, it will soon fade, if I place it near my heart!"

"Oh, sister! do not talk thus, you distress me. What —what is the matter with you? Are you ill—in trouble? Has your allowance given out?" added the kind child, her

eyes beaming with joy at the idea of discovering an evil which she knew she could remedy.

"No, no, indeed! I have never been so economical; in fact, I can spare you something for your poor pensioners this month," said Helen. "I know what hurts me. This confined city life does not agree with me; I cannot bear company. These balls and parties are killing. In short," she added, as the tears fell fast upon the flower Anna had given her, "I am afraid God has abandoned me; he does not love me as he loves you, Anna!"

"Sister! sister!" cried the pious child, "let not that wicked thought rest one instant in your mind; chase it from you as the breathing of the evil spirit! Oh! no earthly affection, however strong, can compare with the pure, holy love the Saviour bears all, and especially his suffering children! Yes, dearest," continued the inspired girl, "if you have cares which cannot be confided to those around you, let your heavenly Father be your comforter. *He* will apply the healing balm to the wound—*he* will dry those tears; not as I do now, with caresses and kisses, but far more efficaciously with soothing murmurs of relief and joy. It is not when the blessings of earthly goods are showered upon us that we feel the truth of what I tell you. No; it is when those fleeting pleasures are withdrawn from us—when the heart is sad, dejected, alone—that the holy visitation is needed and welcomed! And when the rays of that glorious hope and trust have dawned upon us, the gilded beams of this passing world will appear very dim!"

Helen listened to the sweet sounds of her sister's voice. Oh how powerful is the influence of words of comfort and love upon the suffering mind! 'Tis music—heavenly music!

"Now I know what we would both enjoy," said Anna,—"a visit to Allbreeze. The dear old place must

be lonely without us, this dreary weather. I wonder whether my ducks and chickens miss me? I think they do."

"I dare say," replied Helen, who had brightened at the mention of their country residence, where she had spent every summer since her childhood.

Allbreeze was a beautiful spot on Staten Island, which Mrs. Leeson had purchased in the early years of her marriage. She had derived so much pleasure from her quiet pursuits at the old place, and her children's health had improved so evidently year after year from the beneficial effects of that pure air, that the fond mother associated her only remembrances of real happiness with her life in the country; and Mrs. Leeson had always said that nothing would induce her to sell Allbreeze.

"Yes," continued Anna, pleased with the happy change in her sister's countenance, "we must go down to Staten Island in a few days. The country is ever beautiful, I think, even with this cold, icy atmosphere. Let me see —we are now in February. In three months more we will be settled out there; and when we have showers of roses around us, we won't think of cherishing and admiring a little bud like this one."

"True," responded Helen. "We value not the gifts of Providence when we are in the midst of them; but when the dreary blast of trial has chilled our hearts, then, as you said just now, Puss, we appreciate even a word of consolation."

"But," added Anna, "*you* have no experience in those matters, sister; you, the belle of fashion—the queen of beauty!"

"'Tis not all gold that glitters," sighed Helen. "Many a broken heart has been concealed beneath a gorgeous mantle."

A gentle knock was heard at the door.

"Mrs. Grantly has called for you, miss, to go visiting," said Sophie.

"Oh! how annoying!"

"Go, go, sister!" interrupted Anna; "it will divert your mind, and do you good;" and seeing Helen hesitate, she added, "Sophie, tell Mrs. Grantly to wait a few moments. I will go down to entertain her. I know mamma is out with Aunt Seraph. Now hurry, dearest, and make yourself fine; you know, Sir Archibald will be here in a few days."

Little did the fond child dream of the anguish that name recalled.

Helen sat a moment, as if undecided; then, rising suddenly, she exclaimed, "Why not stare my wretched fate in the face? What care I, after all?"

Oh, how true that no comfort can permanently soothe the heart wherein bitterness and rancour reside!

"Shall we go to the Elvingtons? This is their reception-day," said Mrs. Grantly to her niece, as they entered the carriage.

"Just as you like, aunt. But we had better drive down to Stewart's first, as you have some purchases to make; although, really, our toilet is rather showy for the occasion."

"Nonsense! You are like Henriette. Do not all the New York ladies promenade their finery every day in Broadway? Martin, drive to Stewart's."

Many and varied were the emotions of the belle of the season, as she reclined in her aunt's comfortable carriage, so elegant and stylish, eliciting the remarks and envy of many of the pedestrians of our great thoroughfare:

Pride! pride! Its influence over Helen's mind was still so great, that it admitted of no compromise. And thus it

was that a feeling of pity and mercy toward the unfortunate agent whom fate had selected to bend that haughty spirit, could not enter her heart. It was unchanged; and, sad to say, that restless craving for position and homage was still one of the leading features of Helen's character. While alone with her single-minded and pious sister, the young girl had submitted to that benignant communion of peace and humility; but when exposed to the scorching blast of her aunt's evil example, the innate weakness was made all-powerful.

"Is your dress quite ready for to-morrow night, Helen?" asked Mrs. Grantly, as she stepped out of her carriage at Stewart's.

"Oh, yes! You know I received it from Paris. It is exquisite!—so new, so entirely different from all those we have seen this winter."

"So much the better," answered the fine lady. "I dislike any thing which every one wears. Ah! Mr. Marvell, is that you?" continued Mrs. Grantly, as she met our friend Harry. "Are you disengaged, this morning, and will you accompany us to the Elvingtons?"

"Most willingly, dear madam; but I have Mac Tavish here with me, at the glove-counter, and I cannot very well get off."

"We will take your friend, also," said Mrs. Grantly, who, like other feminine conquerors, was delighted to have as many captives as possible in her train.

Mac Tavish, being a man of more leisure than means, was most happy to spend a few hours in attendance on the ladies, who, having made their purchases, and had sundry insignificant conversations with various acquaintances, returned to their carriage, sweeping the Broadway dust as they passed by, and turning a deaf ear upon the "Please to give

me a penny" of the little street-cleaner. We are wrong. Helen stopped a moment; but, ashamed of her hesitation, she stepped into the carriage.

"What a pity!" thought an elderly lady, who had watched the whole proceeding. "A good seed choked by the briers of worldly influence!" and Mrs. Walker not only gave the child a few pennies, but, taking out a small memorandum-book from her pocket, she inquired her direction, that she might provide for, and perhaps save, the little one from certain ruin.

"What admirable weather! and how becoming your bonnet is, Miss Helen!" said Marvell, who knew that nothing prepares the way to an agreeable conversation so well as a little offering to the pride of the fair listener.

Our heroine, however, was too accustomed to such adulation to take much notice of it. "Where are we going, this morning, aunt?" she said, merely answering Marvell's remark with a smile.

"To the Coverleys, to congratulate Miss Olivia upon her engagement. By-the-by, who is that Mr. Dobbins? I have scarcely met him in society."

"Oh! a very good *parti*, I am told," answered Marvell. "A third or fourth cousin, who returned from India, a few months ago, ten years older, but richer by two hundred thousand dollars. Miss Olivia says it is an old attachment."

"For the gentleman, or for the thousands?" asked Mac Tavish, who had his doubts about Miss Coverley's disinterested feelings.

"Well, I don't know," continued Marvell. "I make it a point never to inquire into such matters. It is safer, I assure you. Ladies are so impenetrable to the naked eye. Present company not excepted," he added, laughing.

"Are you of that opinion, Mr. Mac Tavish?" inquired

Helen, who noticed an incredulous wink in the eye of the cunning Scotchman.

"To tell you the truth, I am not; in fact, at home, in Scotland, the young girls had a great dread of what they called my microscopic science. Eric was too wise for any comfort, they all declared. And, I assure you, it was rather a disadvantage. There were none of those pretty little airs put on in my presence; and that is one reason why I gave up dancing and all the attributes of a beau."

"Now, Mac Tavish, give us an instance of your boasted science," said Marvell; "of course, we cannot allow you to exercise it upon Mrs. Grantly; but perhaps Miss Leeson will submit to your mysterious investigation of her thoughts."

"Most willingly," answered Helen, quite amused. "Do tell me something of myself, Mr. Mac Tavish? I confess my knowledge on the subject is very limited."

"With or without my supernatural sight," replied the young man, "I find nothing but perfection. One thing only strikes me; that is, that Miss Leeson has never been in love."

"False prophet!" exclaimed Harry, while Mrs. Grantly laughed heartily at Mac Tavish's want of discrimination.

"You may laugh, you may call me ridiculous; but nothing was ever more true," continued Eric. "Is it not so, mademoiselle?"

"Indeed, I don't know," answered Helen, blushing, and annoyed at the deep glow which spoke so much more than it meant.

"Well, Mr. Mac Tavish, with all due reverence to your superior wisdom, you will allow us to remain unbelievers until we test it further," said Mrs. Grantly, smiling; and

as the carriage stopped, she added, "What a file of carriages at the Elvingtons! Quite a reception!"

The ladies and their escort entered a spendid mansion in the Fifth Avenue.

A noisy buzz proceeded from the parlour, as they came into the hall, and a bevy of fine ladies and bowing gentlemen soon surrounded Helen and her aunt.

"We anticipate such a delightful evening at your house to-morrow, Miss Leeson!" said Mrs. Elvington, an accomplished manœuvrer, who had already settled one of her daughters in great style, and was now labouring with the same aim for the fair Julia.

"I hope so, dear madam; mamma has been deprived of seeing her friends so long, that she will be most happy to receive them all."

"Will not the countess be there?" continued Mrs. Elvington. "It would be such a treat for her many admirers!"

"Laura never goes out. She devotes herself entirely to her little boy."

Mrs. Elvington turned around to receive other guests, and Sydney Morris offered his arm to Miss Leeson to walk into the back parlour. While they stood partially concealed by the draperies of the folding-doors, Helen overheard a few words which arrested her attention.

"I thought Mrs. Murray would have been here this morning, Mrs. Seyton," said Marvell.

"Have you not heard of that ridiculous affair which took place last evening between Mr. Murray and that silly fellow, Robert Leeson? The poor old lady, unfortunately, was told of it, and she is distressed. I don't know how it will all end," replied the little widow, somewhat concerned.

At that moment, Cora Dalton, who was leaning on Mac Tavish's arm, came toward them.

"Only think, Helen! Mr. Marvell was just telling me of a letter he received from Lord Devere, in which he mentions having bought a beautiful diamond bracelet he destines to the future Lady Courtnay. Some Spanish don, it appears, purchased it for his lordship. That would imply the gentleman had some fixed notions on the subject."

"I don't know," said Helen; and the answer brought the same telltale blush which had so weakened Mac Tavish's pretensions to the science of Lavater.

"I know," continued Cora Dalton, who had a long list of disappointments in memory's store, from which she drew her powers of retaliation, and who enjoyed poor Helen's annoyance. However, an American girl who has been out two winters possesses too many weapons to be unprotected against such attacks.

"Mr. Mac Tavish," interrupted Miss Leeson, "have you exercised your powers as a physiognomist over Miss Dalton? You were quite successful with me, just now!"

"Indeed?" said the delighted Eric; "I knew it was so. But I cannot say the same of Miss Dalton."

"What do you mean?" inquired the puzzled belle.

"Oh, nothing!" responded Helen, with indifference, satisfied with the slight revenge which chance had afforded her. "A secret of little importance, was it not?"

"Very trifling! I will tell you all about it to-morrow night, Miss Dalton," added the young man, anxious to propitiate the lady whose uncle gave such capital dinners.

"Where did you get that sweet rose, Miss Leeson?" asked Sydney Morris, as the offended Cora and her apologizing beau walked off. "Let me look at it. Can I not

keep it? I will send you, in return, the finest bouquet in New York."

"All Flora's kingdom would not purchase that flower, Mr. Morris. I would not give it away for the world!"

"What a rebellious spouse you would make, Miss Helen!" said Morris, laughing. "Could not a husband obtain so slight a favour?"

"No!" answered the young girl, as her thoughts for one instant reverted to her mysterious fate.

"Where were you all this time, darling?" said Mrs. Grantly, as she came up to her niece. "Do you know we have been here an hour? and we shall have very little time left to finish our calls. Mr. Marvell, can I still depend upon you?"

"Of course, dear madam; but Mr. Mac Tavish requested me to be the bearer of his apology, as he has been obliged to walk home with Miss Dalton."

"Very well," answered the lady. "I would like to call on Mrs. Murray; I owe her a visit."

"The old lady is not well; and besides, she has a reception-day," said Marvell. "Perhaps it would be better to go there another time."

Helen understood the hint, and said, "Mr. Marvell is right, aunt. It would be more polite to call on Mrs. Murray's reception-day;" and the young girl was sick at heart as she thought of her brother's danger. In fact, the vision had haunted her since the preceding evening; and the company-smile which hovered on her lip was a bitter contrast to the aching agitation of her heart.

The visit to the Coverleys was rather uninteresting. Miss Olivia received the congratulations of her friends with becoming grace. The wealthy cousin, who, in acquiring his thousands, had also imbibed the easy manners of the

East, now and then expressed his admiration of the treasure about to be bestowed upon him in an elaborate style, most annoying to the delicate ears of the girl of fashion. What a pity Mac Tavish had been compelled to accompany Miss Dalton! He would have enjoyed the visible concern of the bride elect, and perhaps the rather ridiculous appearance of the nabob, who sported a flashy waistcoat, very similar to the one upon which Marvell had passed such a positive censure.

"Too ridiculous!" said Mrs. Grantly, laughing heartily, after they had returned to the carriage. "But his money will set it all right!" added the worldly woman. "Now, let me see—we must go to the Dorsays, the Morrisses—anywhere else, fair lady?"

"You owe a visit to Mrs. Waring, aunt."

"Oh! don't talk of those people!—a passing acquaintance, made at Saratoga!"

"Mrs. Waring is a perfect lady—an agreeable woman," said Helen.

"That may be, but she does not visit in my circle! I don't intend to invite her this winter. Why not drop them at once?"

"Just as you please. Well, then, we shall have time enough to call on the Orlands. You know, aunt, they are quite reduced in their circumstances, and would appreciate any little attention, I am sure. At one time they stood very high, here; but since Mr. Orland's failure, no one seems to notice those ladies. It is a shame."

"Nonsense, Helen! One has a certain amount of obligations to fulfil in society, beyond which one need not be taxed. These people, from the very fact of their being no longer in their former position, cannot expect a share of those civilities which the world confers upon its votaries.

I am very willing to assist them, but do not ask me to waste my valuable time in visits to them. I know they would rather not see me; it would only remind them of the past, and make them blush at their actual state. Don't you think so, Mr. Marvell?"

"Of course," said the gentleman, who knew full well that Mrs. Grantly's heart was inaccessible to such sympathies.

But Helen exclaimed, "Oh, aunt! you cannot think thus. Are we to shun those from whom we have received nought but kindness and politeness, because it is no longer in their power to bestow them? Should we not rather endeavour to make them forget the sad reverses of fortune, by proving to them that *we* are unchanged?"

"All very fine, my dear!" said the lady. "But the world reasons not thus; it is a spoiled child, who will not look at broken toys, which have ceased to afford it any amusement."

"Brava!" exclaimed Marvell: "that was a capital comparison."

Consequently, the Warings being too *common* and the Orlands too *poor*, our party did not call upon them; but the other visits filled up so much time, that it was five o'clock and quite dark when Helen stopped at her father's door. "Good-evening, my dear!" said Mrs. Grantly. "I will carry this devoted beau home with me, and reward him with one of Morel's good dinners."

CHAPTER XII.

HELEN intended going to her room immediately, to ascertain the result of Alice Irving's investigations, but as Jackson opened the door, Mrs. Boget came up to her, and said in a hurried whisper—

"Dinner is on the table, dear child, and your father has inquired twice about you; poor madam has been trying to apologize for your absence. Let me take your bonnet and cloak; go right in to dinner."

Helen did not dread her father's ill humour on her own account, but she knew how painful it was to the dear parent who had weathered that domestic storm so long and so patiently. Notwithstanding her anxiety for her brother, she complied with Boget's request, and entered the dining-room with a bright look, hoping to divert the gathering tempest which was very visible on Mr. Leeson's contracted brow.

"I wish you would make it a point to be ready for dinner, Helen," said the angry father. "I have been obliged to scold everybody to-day; every thing goes wrong in this house, no one attends to my comfort, and you all spend a mint of money."

"I should think we were aware of these facts," said Robert, who was seldom willing to bear the anger of his sire.

"I did not ask *your* opinion on the subject, sir. You were wrong to give it, for it has reminded me of my having paid your tailor a bill of two hundred dollars this morning; and I declare I will not do it again."

"Then I shall have to use my credit; it is not yet exhausted."

"Robert," said Mrs. Leeson, anxious to avoid a discussion which could but turn against the young man, "what have you done with those beautiful engravings you brought from Paris?"

"I gave them to Cora Dalton: in fact I could not help it, she admired them so much."

"What business have *you* to make presents, when you don't pay your debts, sir?" interrupted Mr. Leeson. "I have heard some reports about you, which have given me considerable annoyance. If you don't behave more like a gentleman, I will have nothing to do with you, and you may make a living for yourself."

"Father," whispered Anna, "we are not alone; the servants might overhear you, do not speak thus, for Heaven's sake."

"Nonsense, child! don't I know what I have to do?" said the irritated father, as Robert rose, and dashing his napkin on his chair, rushed out of the room.

A tear glistened in the mother's eye, but not one word escaped her lips; she knew it was useless to reason with her husband in those violent moods.

Of course, no one could enjoy that boisterous meal, which was ended in silence. The unjust and exasperated man, meeting with no more opposition, vented his ire on the servants, complained of every thing, and finally left the house—a welcome relief to the poor victims of his morbid temper.

How strange, that the consciousness of our own errors should make us so harsh to the innocent ones condemned to hear the uncontrolled expression of our passions!

"Mother," said Anna, "I would like to go in to the

Irvings, to see Mrs. Walker about a poor girl in whom she takes an interest. Will you not accompany me?"

"Why should I oblige others to put up with my sad despondency?" replied Mrs. Leeson, as she sat in the drawing-room. "But you had better go in, darling."

"No, not without you, mother dear. Helen said she had a letter to write, and you would be alone down here. I can't go and leave my own Matilda, when she has nothing very pleasant to think over," added the amiable girl in a merry tone.

"Well, then, I will make the exertion. I like kind neighbour Irving exceedingly," and Sophie was summoned for cloaks and hoods.

The tinkling of the bell had brought Alice to the window.

"What news?" asked the anxious sister.

"Not very good," answered the little Quakeress; "of course I could not inquire in a direct manner, but I heard from several persons, and *one* who knows, that the conversation between the two gentlemen had considerably aggravated matters; some say, Robert insulted Mr. Murray in the grossest manner. I only repeat what I heard, Elly."

"Go on," said Helen; "don't conceal any thing from me, Alice, for Heaven's sake!"

"Well, it appears Mr. Murray has sent Robert a challenge, and they are to fight a duel to-morrow morning; I could not find out where, nor who the seconds would be."

"Oh, Lord!" exclaimed the wretched girl, "what shall I do? Alice, have you not thought of something? I have been losing all this day in useless, sinful vanity, and death may be ready to grasp the poor boy."

Helen's tears fell fast, but her's was a mind too rich, too powerful to be crushed without a struggle.

"Alice," she said, hurriedly, "you must go down stairs. Mother and Anna have gone in to see you, try and keep them there until nine o'clock. I will go immediately to Herman Smith; he is the only one who can save Robert."

"I was going to suggest that," said Alice; "God be with you, Elly! farewell."

Helen put on her dark bonnet and cloak, and rang for Mrs. Boget. In five minutes she had explained the whole affair to the good seamstress, who became at once a most interested auxiliary, and both hastened down stairs.

Herman Smith had rooms in a respectable private family in Eighth Street; and although Helen had never been there, she knew that, with Mrs. Boget's protection, there was scarcely any impropriety in her taking this strange step. In fact, even if there had been, Helen was not one to be deterred in a holy mission by the shadow of the world's censure. The idea, the hope of saving her brother alone filled her mind; and to accomplish that aim her energetic affection would have overcome difficulties far more insurmountable than a mere dread of "what people might think." How many noble deeds have been arrested on the wing of fate by this timorous feeling!

"I must go up with you, dear," said Mrs. Boget, as they reached Mr. Smith's residence. "I know the premises well, for I spent two weeks here last winter, nursing the poor young man when he was so ill. You can stay in the parlour with Mr. Herman while I wait for you in his bedroom."

"Mr. Smith is not at home," was the answer to Mrs. Boget's inquiry.

"Well, we will go up and wait for him."

"We would like to speak to him on business," added Helen.

"Very well, ma'am. The gas is lighted in the front room, and there's a good fire."

Helen and her companion went up to Herman's apartments, and while the young girl sat musing over the sad circumstances which had brought her there, worthy Mrs. Boget discreetly walked into the back room, and, having lighted a candle, was soon absorbed in a reverie quite as gloomy as that which agitated her young mistress.

One hour had elapsed; the clock struck seven, and still Herman did not come home. "He may have gone to a dinner-party," thought Helen; "he probably knows nothing of this unfortunate affair." And as the minute-hand crept toward eight o'clock, the anxious girl was almost distracted with dismal presentiments. She rose to communicate her fears to Boget, but at that moment she heard a man's footstep, and as the door opened she came forward, exclaiming—

"Oh! Herman, at last!" But what was her dismay when she beheld, instead of the friend of her childhood, that same unwelcome one whom fate seemed to throw so constantly in her path—Walter Grey!

The young man's surprise was quite as great; he paused and allowed Helen to retrace her steps toward the chair she had just occupied. For a few moments both were silent. At last, feeling that her situation was no longer bearable, Helen said—

"My presence here must surprise you, sir. I came to see Mr. Smith on my brother's account. I am so anxious about him!" she added, quite overcome.

"I told you last evening, Miss Leeson, that I would make every effort to save Robert, and could you not place that much trust in my devotion? Oh! Helen, I see it too well. Alas! the bitter hatred you felt toward me has not been tempered by my submissive expiation."

"I hate no one," murmured the young girl.

"Thank you for those words!" he answered; and then added, in a nervous, agitated manner, "Miss Leeson, I leave America, my home, my friends, in a few days, for the sole purpose of ridding you of the consciousness of my odious presence. Mine has been a sad life: a combination of melancholy circumstances has blighted my youth, but no disgrace can be attached to my name. Had it not been for the religious principles which my poor mother instilled in my heart at an early age, despair might have prompted me to commit an act which would soon have put an end to my mental torture. But I acknowledge in no man the power to take the life which God has given. I intend travelling through Europe for many years, and will never return to America. Before long, circumstances will, I trust, free you from the fetters which bind you to my wretched fate."

Helen sat almost heedless of the young man's presence, her face concealed in her hands. Visions of the past, of the future, flittered across her mind, and pity's cry was heard. But alas! pride—that evil cloud which had hung over her whole life—intercepted the brilliant messenger Heaven had sent to soften the young girl's heart. Even then, she thought of the English nobleman—his wealth, his rank. Numberless are the fabrics fancy can erect in a few short seconds.

"Helen," continued Walter, "will you let me depart thus, without a look of mercy?"

Boget knocked gently at the door.

"Oh!" exclaimed the young girl, "nine o'clock—I must go." Then, turning to Walter, she added, "I may forgive at some future period, but I never can forget; farewell!" And she hastened out of the room to conceal her emotion.

"Heartless woman!" he cried. "Oh! when I give up my home, my all, nay would lay down my life this instant for her, she cannot say one word of pity. They are all, all false, save the blessed one in heaven!" As he spoke, Walter's eye rested upon the faded rosebud which had fallen from Helen's sash; he hesitated—then picking it up, he pressed it to his lips. "Oh! it has drooped on her heart," he said; "that heart which should be mine. Helen! my love, my own!"—and the burning tears fell on the flower which that very morning had been moistened by the pearly drops Anna's eloquent and soothing words had called forth.

Strange communion between the husband and wife!

Helen hastened home with Boget, a thousand times more unhappy than when she left it.

Alice had gone up twice to the window, to ascertain whether her friend had returned; and, anxious and concerned, she had contrived to keep Mrs. Leeson and Anna until half-past nine. Helen and Boget had just got home, when they came in, unconscious of their absence.

After telling the kind little neighbour that she had been unsuccessful, Helen knelt to pray—to try Anna's all-powerful remedy. But nothing could calm her troubled spirit, and eleven o'clock found her still at the task.

"What is the matter, Boget?" she exclaimed, as the good woman came in with a look of deep concern.

"A note, Miss Helen; Mr. Smith sent it this minute, to be delivered immediately."

With a trembling hand, the sister opened Herman's note. It ran thus:

MY DEAR MISS HELEN:

I regretted not being at home when you called. Be perfectly easy: Robert's foolish conduct has been repaired by the judicious interference of Mr. Grey. Your brother

owes him his life, for George Murray is not a man to be trifled with. Good-night. I will explain all to-morrow.

Truly yours, H. SMITH.

"It is all arranged, Boget!" exclaimed Helen, joyfully. "Now go to bed, for we both need sleep."

And did the exhausted girl lay down to rest? No; she knelt in fulness of heart to the heavenly Father who had rescued the dear one. And as she rose from that long meditation, she exclaimed, "Oh Lord! and am I doomed to owe him such a debt of gratitude? He has saved Robert, and I was unmerciful!"

CHAPTER XIII.

"SLEEP, image of thy father! sleep, my boy!" murmured the young countess.

Little Arthur was taking his usual nap in his mother's room, and Laura sat near the sleeping boy with tearful eyes. She gently parted the bright curls on the fair brow; and as they fell in golden streams upon the dark velvet cushion, she watched the closed eyelids, the heavy lashes, and the quivering smile which now and then brightened the placid countenance. There was intense sorrow in the gaze—it told a fearful tale of suffering, Poor flower! blighted by the storm of life! Thy joys have been scattered to the winds like the roseate petals of the May bud!

"Oh, Arthur, I cannot live without thee! My only love!" whispered the young widow. "The world is dark and gloomy! Why didst thou leave me here alone?" And the drooping head fell on the pillow near the little sleeper.

"Mother, mother dear, speak to your pet! Look up, mamma!" said the child, as he awoke.

She answered not, but folded him passionately to her bosom.

"Tears in my pretty eyes!" said little Arthur, as he wiped the burning drops with his sleeve. "No; Arty won't kiss mamma, if she cries! He will love Nina better,"

he added, with a cunning look, while Laura smiled through her tears, and said—

"Will you lie down again, sweet? or will you sleep on my lap?"

"No; Arty is a man!" he answered, standing upright with all the majestic dignity of his noble race. "He will be like papa—a big man, and go to see him one of these days. Why does he not live here with us?"

"He is there," responded the countess, as she took up the little one in her arms and carried him to the window.

It was a bright, clear day, and the rays of the winter sun shone in full on the mother and her boy.

"Up there?" he asked, as his eye followed Laura's finger. "So far? And will I go there soon?"

"We *will* both be there one day, I trust, my darling; but Arty must be good, and mind mamma and Aunt Seraph, and then papa will love his boy, and God will call us to him in his beautiful paradise!"

"Are there trees and flowers, and no poor people, up there, mother?"

"I think so, dearest. But here is Nina. She wants Arthur to go and take a walk with her, and call to see Cousin Anna, who loves her Naples boy so well," said the young countess.

"Yes, Arty will go and see the birds, and Anna will tell me about the poor boy who was so cold," added the little fellow, running to his nurse.

Laura's eyes followed the child, who stood for a moment at the door, kissing his hand in farewell, and then she threw herself on the couch, quite exhausted. Alas! alas! the hereditary disease was doing its work of destruction.

"Are you busy, or going to take a nap, Laura?" asked Alice Irving, as she came in very softly.

"Neither, dearest; and I am most happy to see you. This is one of my bad days, and Arty has been trying to smile away the evil visions which now and then crush me completely."

"Now, don't rise," said Alice; "I will sit near you. I came for a little chat. I, too, have had the blues most terribly of late, and I cannot stand them—so wearing, so excruciating!"

"You! dear child? You, the very picture of happiness? How can that be? Tell me, what is the matter with you? Was it your aunt's unpropitious appearance, the other night, which distressed you so much?"

"Oh, no!—worse—a thousand times worse than that! Would that I had followed Aunt Martha's advice!—that I had never sought the society of the gay. But I cannot live like a nun. I must talk, I must laugh. Can the bee live without sunshine and flowers?"

"Alas, no!" answered Laura. "Happiness and the joys of the heart are as essential to our being as the bright beams of the sun."

"But those rays of love are scorching, sometimes, Laura. I have played with the fire, and it has consumed my comfort, my cheerfulness, my all!"

"Don't say so, Alice! You are but a child, without experience. Let me be your Mentor. I have no interest in this world but the welfare of those I love, and you are one of the chosen ones."

"I know it," said the little Quakeress; "but I dare not acknowledge my folly to you, Laura; and still, I came on purpose to do so."

"Alice, you are in love, and I know with whom," exclaimed the countess, with an expression of joy.

"Why do you smile and look so happy?" said the blush-

ing girl. "You cannot approve of my choice; I fear he is unworthy of me."

"He may be corrected—affection will accomplish much," added the young widow, who remembered the happy change effected in her own wild and boisterous nature by the benignant influence of her husband.

"No, Laura, it can never be; and I told him so, when he urged me to leave my father's house and be married to him secretly."

"Impossible! Robert never could have proposed such a thing!"

"Robert! I am not speaking of him, Laura. Oh, no! It is Allan Dorsay."

"Allan Dorsay! Alice, is it possible you could have been so imprudent? You have not, I hope, engaged yourself to him?"

"No, no! but I promised to do so in a few days, and partially consented to run away with him."

"Kneel down, dearest, and thank the heavenly Father who has spared you this trial! He is unworthy of you—a dissipated, idle fellow, of no standing at all. Why did you not consult your mother—your aunt?"

"I am afraid of aunt," answered the sobbing girl, "and mother knows nothing of those matters. But you may be mistaken, Laura. He promised so solemnly to be kind and devoted; and—and—I am attached to him—I cannot give him up."

"Then you *are* engaged to Mr. Dorsay?" said her friend, with sadness. "I am not one of those who think lightly of such promises; but better, far better, would it be for you to die now, than become the wife of that man! Let me see," added Laura, pensively; "I think I can give you a positive proof of Mr. Dorsay's being unworthy of you."

"Oh! don't, don't!" said the agitated girl. "I would rather never know it!"

"Well, just as you like. But remember my warning to you, and break off immediately with Allan Dorsay."

"I cannot, indeed!"

"Alice, will you promise me not to see him before to-morrow night? If you have not been convinced of what I tell you by that time, I leave you to your fate. Now, dry your tears, dearest. It is almost twelve o'clock. The bell will soon ring for lunch, and it will give aunt so much pleasure to have your company. Ah! Arthur, pet, quite ready? Come and show your finery to Alice."

The little fellow walked in with his velvet coat trimmed with ermine, the golden locks escaping from the little velvet cap, and falling upon his shoulders. "Fine, friend Ally?" inquired the noble boy.

"Very fine, darling! And what have you got in your hand?"

"A penny for the sick boy, whose prayers will take me to papa!" answered the child, with sparkling eyes.

"Are those mamma's black diamonds?" said Aunt Seraph, who came in at that moment, and caught up the little idol in her arms. "And where is my boy's cane, with the gold head, Nina?"

"Here, here! Tasso has it!" he exclaimed, as an immense Newfoundland came bounding in, carrying the little fellow's favourite toy.

"Now go, dearest. Nina and Tasso will take care of you;" and with another kiss Laura dismissed the child, who went off in great glee, followed by his faithful Nina and the no less devoted dog.

"Now, ladies," said Aunt Seraph, "I claim your presence in my room. Levett has superintended the baking

of some muffins, which I can answer for. Alice," continued the kind old lady, "why that dejected look? I don't like it! It is quite bad enough to see the dark cloud on this dear face," she added, turning to Laura.

"Have you positively decided upon not going to Aunt Leeson's to-night?" asked the countess.

"Of course! I would cut a forlorn figure, there. As long as you stay at home, I have no inducement for the sacrifice it certainly would cost me. I wish you could go, Alice."

"I would like to, very much, but you know that is quite impossible."

"Well, I would not give it a thought," said Laura. "We will go and see Helen dressed, and I am sure no one can eclipse her."

"Take a seat, ladies, here, on this comfortable couch, and pay due homage to these delicacies," said Miss Marsy. "This is my favourite meal, but I do like it so much better with agreeable company. The bell! Out, Laura?"

"Engaged: I prefer the truth at all times. I wish it was Emma—the dear child has not been here for so long."

"Here she is," exclaimed Aunt Seraph.

"You must have been informed of my great desire to see you by some mysterious spirit," continued Laura, rising to kiss her friend. "Now our fourth seat is occupied, and the muffins are perfection; don't you think so, Alice?"

A shade still hung over the bright countenance of the little Quakeress.

"And what news of the gay world do you bring us, fair lady?" asked Miss Marsy.

"Have you not heard what happened to Robert two nights ago, as we were leaving the opera? It is the town

talk, and I very foolishly stumbled upon the person most interested just now. Awkward it would have been if the lady were not such a sweet, charming woman." Emma then related what had taken place, adding—"Not knowing any thing of this ridiculous affair, and anxious to have Mrs. Murray to spend the evening with us, in a few days, to meet some literary gentlemen, I called there about an hour ago. The old lady was sitting in her boudoir, and received me with her usual kindness, seeing at once, I suppose, that I knew nothing of the matter which caused her so much annoyance—nay, anxiety. And as I apologized for calling at such an early hour, and explained the object of my visit, she answed with tearful eyes—'I don't really know whether I shall be able to accept your invitation. I have been in such a state of excitement about my son, that it has made me quite miserable. But it is all settled, thank God! I regretted this silly affair so much, feeling great interest in Miss Leeson and her family. Miss Marsy,' she added, 'is an old friend of mine; we are contemporaries, but, unfortunately, have lost sight of each other of late.'"

"Yes," interrupted Aunt Seraph, "there is not a finer, a better woman in the world than Mrs. Murray. Few have been more unfortunate! She lost her husband and several children many years ago, and is devoted to her son George. She is one of the few for whom I would make the exertion of going into society."

"Will you not come to our house on Tuesday, to meet her?" asked Emma.

"No, dear, I am wedded to this old place and to this lazy child of mine," continued the kind friend.

"Alice, *you* can come; can't you? Such a very small party. Not more than twelve altogether. No fashionable beaux," said Miss Grantly.

"Oh, no! I am going with Aunt Martha to hear a lecture on metaphysics."

"Nonsense!" said Emma, laughing. "I will answer for your deriving more real benefit from the conversation of Professor Amory and M. de Cerny than from your scientific lecture; not that I wish to deprecate the study of that power of our mind, but I don't think your genius runs in that direction. By-the-by, what possessed you to walk with that stupid Allen Dorsay, yesterday, Ally? Is he to be your escort on the night of the lecture?"

The poor girl blushed deeply, but Emma was unmerciful, and continued—

"A silly fellow, who flirts with all the girls, and makes fools of so many! Why, you have more wit in your little finger than Mr. Dorsay in all his insignificant person."

"How cruel you are, this morning, Emma!" said Aunt Seraph, who, of all things, dreaded annoying others. She knew not that energetic devotion which never recoils from struggle to benefit the loved one. This both Laura and Emma felt toward Alice.

"Why, Emma!" at last said the crestfallen girl; "one would think, to hear you talk, that I was going to marry Mr. Dorsay."

"God forbid! I never would speak to you again. But," she continued, rising, "although your society is most agreeable, ladies, I must hurry home; I have many little things to prepare for this evening. I suppose we will have a crowd at Mrs. Leeson's, and enough supper for five hundred more than will be there. Were people as ridiculous in your time, Miss Marsy?"

"Not exactly; we were less ambitious and happier. All the brilliancy of this generation seems to weigh so

heavily upon it, there are no young and light hearts now-a-days—you are all prematurely old."

"True," said Laura; "and the consequence is, I fear, that few are wise. Now, Emma, do come soon again—you pay us such flying visits, and make us wish for more. Your's is such a bright spirit—one which confers so much pleasure upon all."

"My dear countess," interrupted the sweet girl, "you will increase my organ of vanity so considerably, that I will have to alter the shape of my bonnet! Now don't, pray! Nature has forbidden me that feminine gratification, and I am most submissive to the old dame's injunctions. Farewell, Aunt Seraph! Alice, let not your bright eyes be dimmed by my joke just now, but please shake off Mr. Dorsay's counterfeit admiration as soon as possible. Farewell, all!"

Soon after, Alice Irving took leave of her friends, promising to meet them that evening at Mrs. Leeson's.

CHAPTER XIV.

ALL the arrangements were made in the splendid residence of Robert Leeson, Esq., for the reception of his many *friends*.

"*Friends!*" murmured the host, as he paced his gorgeous saloons alone, between nine and ten o'clock. "Friends!" he repeated, with a bitterness of expression ill suited to the brilliant display which surrounded the solitary man. "Not one of them would lend me five hundred dollars, and here I am lavishing my last thousands upon them! Yes, my last! and then ruin will follow—disgrace, contempt, and pity! Oh! any thing but *that!*" he added, as he shook his clenched fist. At that moment, his eye fell upon a mirror, which reflected lifelike every feature of that distorted countenance. The unfortunate man dropped on a chair, and buried his face in his hands.

"Wretch, wretch that I am! Oh! I deserve it all! The cry of vengeance rings in my ears! But I shall not live to see the awful consequences of my folly—the ruin of my family! There is here within this torn breast a gnawing tormentor which will soon destroy it! Yes, soon! Terrific mockery!" he added, as he glanced at all the magnificence which his own pride had accumulated around him.

While this mental tragedy was enacting in those splendid saloons, Helen, nervous, wearied by her excitement of the preceding evening, was finishing her toilet; and a bitter smile hovered on her lips when Anna exclaimed—

"Oh, what a pity Lord Devere did not return before our ball! This is the most becoming dress you have worn this winter!" It was one of those marvellous productions composed of blue tulle and bluebells which emanate from the prolific fancy of a French couturière, and gratified would have been the artist could she have seen the exquisite result of her exertions.

Unconscious, heedless of all, Helen stood, allowing Sophie to arrange the flowers and draperies as she chose.

"Ah! here are Alice and Laura!" exclaimed Anna. "Welcome, ladies! come and give a little animation to this beautiful statue. Who would think that our Helen was the belle of New York, and about to become Lady Courtnay?"

"Nonsense!" said Laura. "The belle of New York, as you call this lady, Anna, is bound to bestow her smiles upon an American; and besides, poor Cora Dalton would die of disappointment, if his lordship became our cousin—that would be terrible!"

Helen's toilet being finished, she sat down and dismissed Sophie.

"Now, girls," she said, "would you not like to see a little of the comedy in which we are going to act a part this evening? Some call it a farce—it is often a tragedy. Well, no matter; it is worth seeing, I dare say, and I would advise you to take a seat on the back piazza, which is heated by the furnace, and quite close; you will be entirely concealed. I wish I could join you, instead of playing the agreeable in the parlour."

"I accept your invitation to be a spectator this evening," said the young countess. "Alice and I will be quite amused, I dare say. Anna, do you feel inclined to share the fun?"

"No, not to-night; I am tired. I have been spending

all the afternoon entertaining Jane Kelly, who is fast declining, poor old soul. I am going to bed."

"What a beautiful bouquet!" said Alice. "And here is another. Who are they from?"

"Allan Dorsay and Sydney Morris," answered Helen, with indifference. "Ladies, good-night; it is ten o'clock. How absurd to begin the evening when nature almost closes it! Every thing is reversed in this sad world!" she added, as she left the room. On the stairs, she met Robert, who was going up to Anna, to have a button sewed on his glove.

"Brother," she whispered, "how did you settle your difficulty the other night?"

"Oh! very well, indeed; but Walter did it all—the finest fellow! One of these days I will tell you how much I am indebted to him."

Helen hastened down stairs, and entered the drawing-room.

Mr. Leeson, still absorbed in his racking meditation, sat with his back toward the door. He heard not his daughter's noiseless step.

"Father," murmured the young girl, as she noticed the complete abstraction of the wretched man, "are you ill?"

"Helen! my own, my precious child!" he exclaimed, as he started and gazed with undisguised admiration on the lovely girl. It seemed as though a bright star had risen upon the dismal horizon of his thoughts. But in one instant the approaching ruin of his fortune, the agony it would bring to the loved one, rushed upon his mind, and he turned from the brilliant vision in despair.

Accustomed to these inexplicable shades in her father's disposition, Helen felt no unusual concern, but walked into

the adjoining parlour to suggest some little arrangements to her mother, who, exhausted and wearied, sat lamenting, as she often had done, the useless expenditure her husband's proud wish had incurred.

"Well," said Helen, as for a moment she kneeled before the tender parent, "if all those who give balls prepare for them as we do, it is a bitter farce. Father looks despair itself; you, dearest, not much better; and I," she added mentally, "a thousand times worse!"

"It all proceeds from one cause," said Mrs. Leeson—"a bad beginning. At the dawn of one's married life, if the light of wisdom was sought to illuminate the path of duty, the evils we now stumble upon, and which crush so many, might be avoided. Never forget that, darling, and—oh! the bell! It will take me five minutes to put on my company smile! Alas! care stiffens our features more than myriads of wrinkles, and the heart becomes chilled against the contact of society!"

"Amen!" muttered the young girl, as she turned with a smile to welcome Mrs. Waring, who, not being exceedingly fashionable, was rather more rational than the other members of Mrs. Leeson's circle, and came earlier.

Miss Augusta Waring was a fine, showy girl, neither more nor less well educated than many of our young friends, who, having taken a desperate leap from the superficial studies of a school-room to the life of dissipation which they all lead, could scarcely be expected to possess a very large amount of knowledge. But Miss Augusta was bright, intelligent, very pretty; and the wealth of her papa was so brilliant a screen to conceal the deficiencies in her conversation, that few of her numerous admirers were even aware of them.

"Beautiful!" said the young lady, as Robert led her

into the library, to show her some exquisite little statuettes by Dantan.

"By whom, did you say?"

"Dantan," repeated the young man, "a French artist."

"I admire them exceedingly!" replied Miss Augusta; "but this is much handsomer," she added, pointing to a gaudy nick-nack.

"Oh, Robert! let me see those little gems!" said Emma Grantly. "Do look, Mr. Smith; is it not nature itself? So perfect! What an enviable talent, to be able to give animation to this morsel of clay!"

"I hear the music, Mr. Leeson!" interrupted Miss Waring. "Am I engaged to you for the first or second polka?" and she tripped off to the dancing-room, while Emma and Herman were still in contemplation of the admirable little personifications of Victor Hugo and Fanny Elsler. Every one to his taste!

So thought the fascinating Mrs. Seyton, as she stood surrounded by a bevy of beaux, to each of whom she addressed a look or a word, which kept them spell-bound around her. There was a mysterious power in the winning airs of the young widow which few could resist. Even the rational ones, such as George Murray, (who, by-the-by, had a previous engagement, that evening,) were captivated by the sparkling wit and grace of the fair siren. But wit, they say, is a dangerous gift, if not submitted to the chastening rod of Christian Charity; and as the modest sister of Hope and Faith seldom ventures in the splendid saloons of fashion, Mrs. Seyton was accused by many of not being over-intimate with her. In short, she was called satirical.

"Quel mélange!" whispered the lady to our friend Mac Tavish, as she cast a contemptuous glance upon the fair Augusta, and two or three others, whom she considered

intruders in that brilliant galaxy. "I have a perfect horror of amalgamation!"

"That depends considerably upon the ingredients!" replied the young Scotchman, smiling.

"No, I don't admit that. Oh! do look at poor Olivia and her tall cousin! What a frown of care upon her brow! No wonder, with such a prospect! Only think of being called Mrs. Dobbins! It will kill her, most undoubtedly!"

"What shall we call her disease, then, Mrs. Seyton?"

"Why, I suppose an attack of Dobbins. What a delightful epitaph it would make: 'Here *lies* Olivia, who could not stand Dobbins!'" and the cruel little wit laughed heartily at her own distorted fancy.

While some are smiling, others sighing, and many gaping, in that crowded ball-room, let us step for a few minutes into the back piazza, where Laura and Alice have a comfortable seat to see the play, as Helen called it, thanks to Mrs. Boget's kind care.

"My children," said the good woman, "when you are tired of looking on, come down to my room. I will send Caleb in for some supper for you. Did your aunt order the carriage, Miss Laura?"

"Of course! and Alice is going to sleep with Anna. We are very dissipated, to-night. Thank you, old friend," added the countess, as Mrs. Boget closed the door which opened on a back staircase.

"How amusing, and how I should like to be in the ball-room!" said Alice. "But is there no danger of our being seen?"

"Not the least. There are two curtains, beside the blinds, before us, and all these people are too busy to dream of taking a peep out here. What luxury! What extrava-

gance! A great deal more, in fact, than there was in my time."

"How long ago was that, Laura?"

"About three years. It has appeared an age to me," sighed the young widow.

"Yes; when one is in pain time hangs heavily indeed," replied Alice, in a tone almost as sad. "Oh! do look at Mrs. Grantly! What a proud, haughty woman she is! Such splendid diamonds! Who is that pretty girl on whom she looks so disdainfully? In fact, there is a terrible disparity in their style of dress. Poor people should stay at home, now-a-days. There is no competing with the crushing magnificence of these people! See the young girl shrink in the corner, as Mrs. Grantly sweeps by her!"

"What a shame!" said Laura, who had noticed the motion of the fine lady. "That is Grace Orland—a sweet little creature; but, as you say, the poor child would be better at home than exposed to the humiliating blast of this heartless society."

"Aunt Martha may be right!" muttered the little Quakeress.

"Not entirely, for there are many kind and noble hearts in that crowd, thank heaven! And without social intercourse, what would become of humanity? The great mistake in our society is a want of rational moderation. That has brought on the abuse which all deplore, and which has caused so many to condemn it without appeal. There is your friend Delia Warren!" continued the countess; "and here is Mr. Dorsay!"

Alice had noticed the meeting between the flirts; but not one word escaped her lips, as, with aching eyes, she watched every action of the faithless one. It was the same look of intense admiration which she thought was the expression

of his devotion to her; and from the motion of his lips she fancied she heard the very words which had entranced her eager heart; and when, as both stood partially concealed behind the lace curtain, she saw Miss Warren not only detach a rosebud from her bouquet and present it to Allan Dorsay, but allow the young man to press her hand, unconscious of the witnesses on the piazza, Alice's head dropped on her friend's shoulder, and burning tears of broken hopes fell on Laura's bosom.

"Did I not tell you so?" whispered the soothing voice of affection. "I knew it well. Weep not, dearest; he is not worthy of your tears. And that girl is a fit subject for such devotion as his."

"Oh!" sobbed the young girl, "can any one be so deceitful! so false! Fool that I was to believe him! I never shall love another man—no, never!"

"Don't say so, dear child," interrupted the countess: "never is a long day at your age; but be careful, in future, to bestow your affections upon a worthy object; consult those who are older and wiser than yourself."

Alice sighed, and for some time not a word passed between the friends; but the little Quakeress had too inexhaustible a fund of humour to allow her disappointment to master her feelings very long.

"Well," she said, at last, "I hope he will jilt Delia as he jilted me—the deceitful fop!"

"He will, you may be sure of it: such men as Allan Dorsay make it a business. See him fluttering about Helen. Just look! He has no chance there, I can tell him," continued Laura, laughing at the manœuvres of the young man. "Now, Alice, this is all very fine, but I am getting tired; I came here for the express purpose of curing you of your disease: that being effected, I will claim a little

supper from Boget and drive home. Will you remain here any longer?"

"No; I have seen quite enough for one evening."

The friends adjourned to the sewing-room, and were soon enjoying a cosy little supper. Laura went home at twelve o'clock, and Alice proceeded up the back staircase to Anna's room. She had to pass before Robert's apartment, which had been appropriated to the gentlemen. Supposing them all to be down stairs, the young girl walked leisurely up to the door. There stood the guilty Allan Dorsay, who was in the act of changing his gloves and repairing the slight disasters of his head-dress. He started and exclaimed—

"You here, Miss Irving, at this hour!"

"I have spent the whole evening on the piazza, and have been exceedingly amused. Good-evening, Mr. Dorsay; don't let me detain you."

"By Jupiter!" muttered the young man; "I have made a bad job of it, this time."

Beware of back piazzas and judicious friends, O ye wholesale deceivers!

CHAPTER XV.

THE ball was over, and four or five days of life's routine had restored the members of Robert Leeson's family to their usual avocations. No more mention was ever made of the festival which had incurred so much expense and mental agony.

The proud man had acquitted his debt toward society, but those which were far more sacred still remained undischarged; and the unhappy father, more irritable than ever from the consciousness of his own folly, toiled on day after day, in vain endeavouring to repair the irreparable wreck of his fortune.

A few months more, and he could no longer conceal the dilapidated state of his business. How essential, then, he thought, that Helen should marry before that time! And would Sir Archibald return to renew his suit? Of his daughter's consent Mr. Leeson felt quite secure; and with nervous anxiety he read over the list of passengers by the Southern steamers, and far more often than he was wont to, the father would go up to his worldly sister, to seek some solace from the hopeful accounts which the lady gave of Sir Archibald's admiration for her niece.

One morning, as Mr. Leeson unfolded the Daily Times, he saw the arrival of the Cahawba, and, hastily glancing over the paper, he exclaimed, "Lord Devere and his nephew have returned!"

Helen was just entering the dining-room. She started as

her father continued, "Your admirer has arrived, Elly. What a pity we did not put off our ball! But I thought those gentlemen would have remained much longer in Cuba; and now, that we are in Lent, no large parties can be given; how very annoying! We must invite them to dinner. I think very highly of Lord Devere; in fact, I have always had a partiality for Englishmen."

After this unusually amiable speech, Mr. Leeson made his exit, leaving Helen to reflect upon it and finish her solitary breakfast. It was ten o'clock, and Robert, habitually her opposite companion at table, had gone down town much earlier that morning.

The young girl took up the paper; and with a fluttering heart read over the list of passengers by the Cahawba; for one instant her eye rested on the name of the young nobleman. As she mechanically followed the printed column, she read—"Passengers by the steamship Atlantic for Liverpool, Mr. Bronson, lady and child, John Manvers, Walter Grey—"

"Gone!" she exclaimed, with an expression impossible to describe; but satisfactory it certainly was.

Helen threw down the paper, and went up to her room with the intention of spending a quiet morning with Anna. A touch of the little tinkler soon brought in Alice Irving; who, as Laura had said, was completely cured of her love-disease, and as cheerful as of yore.

"What makes you look so happy, this morning?" asked Anna, whose instinctive affection immediately detected the change in her sister's manner. "It quite reminds me of your sweet self, as you were six months ago, before that terrible illness."

"The weather is beautiful to-day," said Helen; "and I am like the birds—the first glimpse at the return of spring

always fills my heart with delight. Just hear your little pets singing; the sun is shining on their cage, and its bright rays rejoice the little ones."

"Yes; but they have sung many a time lately, sister, when you were very, very sad."

"Good-morning, my Lady Courtnay!" said Alice Irving; "allow me to congratulate you upon the arrival of Sir Archibald, whose name I have just seen in the paper.'

"Helen knows," interrupted Anna, smiling. "Alice, do you think it is the arrival of his lordship which makes my birds sing so merrily? Sister says that *her* good spirits and their joy proceed from the same cause—the rays of the sun."

"You wicked little puss!" exclaimed Helen. "Now, girls, no teasing, if you please; and do not raise your hopes to such a pitch. It is more than likely that some news from England has hastened the return of those gentlemen, and that a wealthy bride is awaiting Sir Archibald in his native country. *I* think so."

"You are fibbing, neighbour," said Alice; "you and all know the gentleman is desperately attached to Miss Leeson; and if the English nobleman returns to his native home this spring, it will be to introduce his American bride to his illustrious relatives. How sorry we shall be to lose you, but how proud of our friend, Lady Courtnay!"

"You are talking very foolishly," interrupted Helen, with mingled sadness and pleasure; "I am certain you are mistaken. Here is Laura," she added, "please drop the subject."

"What subject?" inquired the countess. "Anna, Master Arthur has come to play with the birds. We will send him with Nina to your room, while I take a rest here. I have just walked up to the Reservoir, and met Mr. Horace

Grantly, who seemed quite flurried. What do you think it was about? People are deranged in this New York."

"Well, what was it, Cousin Laura?" asked Anna, while Helen blushed and Alice smiled.

"Nothing at all, but the arrival of Lord Devere and his insignificant nephew; the poor old gentleman was quite out of breath, going down, he said, to meet his lordship. I assure you that our good Americans, usually so gifted with sound sense and judgment, become completely devoid of them when in contact with any personification of nobility."

"*You* should not say so, Laura," said Alice. In one instant, she would have given any thing to recall her words, for an expression of intense suffering appeared on the countenance of the young countess.

"Alice," she said, at last, "you know me too well to believe what you hinted at just now. And even if I had been weak enough to have submitted to that ridiculous influence of rank and title, would it excuse the frailty in others?"

"No, darling; pardon me. I did not mean any thing, I assure you; but we were rejoicing and talking to Helen about the young nobleman when you came in, and I did not fancy your abusing that poor young man."

"Again I say that you are unwise, for Helen scarcely knows Sir Archibald, who evidently came to this country to seek a rich wife. Upon such a short acquaintance, would you have her trust her happiness to a foreigner, who will take her from her family and home, and loosen the links which bind her to the joys of her childhood? But this is idle talk. *I* know Helen does not fancy him, and would not accept him."

Helen answered not, but went on with her embroidery

with nervous speed. Anna had gone in to Little Arty for a romp, and joyous sounds of laughter proceeded from the adjacent room.

"Why, Robert," exclaimed Alice, "what brought you home at this hour? and what has given you that dejected air?"

"How are you all, ladies?" said the young man, not noticing the inquiring looks of the party. "Laura, dear, will you allow me to take this seat at your feet? I have so much to tell you, and something to show you, too."

"Am I intruding, Mr. Leeson?" asked the little Quakeress, rather piqued at Robert's not answering her question.

"No, no, Alice; I consider you one of the family, and besides, what I have to say is no secret. It may not be entirely to my credit, but you know I don't pretend to be a very quiet young man, nor a very wise one either."

"But why did you come home so early, brother?" interrupted Helen.

"I have been down to the steamer to see Walter Grey off. I could not bear to part with the poor fellow, who looked so unhappy, so miserable! I asked him, a few days ago, what made him go to Europe. 'I must, my dear fellow,' he said; 'it can't be helped. I shall be absent several years, and perhaps may never return! I have nothing to live for, and the sooner God calls me to him the better!' he added."

"Poor fellow!" said Laura.

"Yes; and I would have given any thing to find out what was the matter with him, for I am greatly indebted to Walter. You must know—now don't frown, Miss Alice—ladies are not always wise either, I dare say. Well, I got myself into a terrible scrape last winter. One night at the

club, I lost a thousand dollars, and with one or two fellows who were not disposed to spare me. I had no means of procuring the money. Father would not come to my assistance, and twice before I had called upon Aunt Seraph—once through you, Laura—to pay my debts. What was to be done? I was almost distracted, and really, for one moment, I thought of blowing my brains out! Good gracious! ladies, don't look so frightened! You see, I did not do it; and, in fact, I rather think it would have been a difficult matter for me to execute such a resolution, as I have a most decided fancy for the good things of this world, and don't feel at all secure about what my deserts may bring me in the next.

"At all events, I was in great trouble—most miserable, when, on the following morning, I received a note from Grey, containing a check for a thousand dollars, and these few words, which I never shall forget—

"'You are in trouble, my dear Robert. Allow me to assist you. We will settle when perfectly convenient.

"'Truly yours.'

Now, was not that pretty?"

"Beautiful!" exclaimed the countess. "So unostentatious! Such genuine friendship!"

"So I thought," said the young man. "I really felt most grateful. When I thanked Walter, the only thing he said, was—'Never play again, Robert; you will break your sister's heart!' He did not know you, Elly, but had seen you once or twice at the opera, and concluded, I suppose, that you must be extravagantly fond of such a fine fellow as I am!"

"He was right!" responded Helen, not raising her eyes from her work.

"I made a thousand promises to my friend," continued

Robert; "but you know, Miss Alice, that promises and pie-crust have the same fate—they are often broken; and I could no more refrain from a cosy game at cards, than I could help demolishing one of Boget's plum-puddings when within my reach. The consequence was, that for many months I was unable to acquit myself toward Walter, whose manner was ever the same—kind and friendly. Some time ago, however, the old gentleman being in very fine spirits, I persuaded him to hand me over a few hundreds, which I immediately sent to Grey."

"Thank heaven!" muttered his sister.

"Oh! you need not be too prodigal of your thanks, Elly, for I never can return all he has done for me! Lately, in that stupid Murray business, I was a dead man, as sure as I am sitting here, if it had not been for the interference of Walter, who, being very intimate with Murray, induced him to put up with an apology on my part, which certainly would not have satisfied me under the same circumstances. He must have made use of some very powerful arguments, for George Murray, of all men, is the most punctilious in matters of honour."

"I conclude from all this," said Laura, "that your best friend has gone by the Atlantic, to-day, and is now on the broad ocean. Poor young man!"

"Quite interesting!" said Alice. "Were there many persons down at the steamer?"

"A great many: Herman, George Murray, and even the old lady, was there, to see Walter off. I saw her go down in his state-room, with him, and as they parted, she said, sadly—'Farewell, my dear boy. God be with you! Remember your promise to write often. George will be forlorn without you, Walter. Don't forget to see my friend Madame de Mornay, in Paris; she will be a great resource

to you. Farewell!' and the kind old friend was in tears when the steamer left the wharf. I handed her to her carriage, but I scarcely think she knew who I was. As I was leaving, I met father and Uncle Horace, both in search of Lord Devere and his nephew. 'What brought you down here, Robert?' asked father. 'I came to see my friend Walter Grey,' I replied. 'Your friend!' exclaimed the old gentleman, with a look so strange, so full of anger, that I did not stay a minute to hear more. As I was walking up Broadway, I espied Aunt Grantly's carriage, containing the two noblemen and Uncle Horace. I suppose father had gone to the counting-house. I therefore concluded to come up here, as I did not fancy seeing a second edition of the paternal glance on the wharf."

"Very odd!" said Alice, while Helen and Laura remained absorbed in thought. "But, Robert, you said you had something to show us."

"I had forgotten it," answered the young man, as he drew a small parcel from his pocket. "You may all look at it!" he added, placing it on Helen's lap. She hastily opened the little package, and started as she gazed on the lifelike features of Walter Grey.

"Is it not handsome?" exclaimed Alice, as she handed the daguerreotype to Laura.

"A beautiful countenance," said the young countess, "but so sad! There is bitter anguish in that expression. How came you by this, Robert?"

"Well, not very honestly," he replied, laughing. "I heard George Murray trying to persuade Walter to have his daguerreotype taken for his mother, yesterday. He refused for some time, but at last promised to meet him in the afternoon at Gurney's. I stopped there, just now, and was struck with the likeness. With some difficulty and one

or two fibs, I induced the man to give me a copy of it, and I assure you no money would purchase this. Poor fellow!" he added. "Don't you think him handsome, Helen?"

"Yes, of course," was the indifferent answer; "but I have seen faces I admired more."

At that moment, little Arty came running into the room, followed by Anna and Tasso, who immediately attempted to remove Robert from his position at his mistress's feet.

"He considers you an intruder, Robert," said the countess, laughing. "That is Tasso's favourite spot."

"Halloa, old fellow!" exclaimed the young man. "I have the best right to this place. Come here, and let's make friends. Here, Tasso!" but the offended animal walked off.

Meanwhile, Anna was sitting on the carpet, with Arty on her lap, showing him the daguerreotype which had fallen from Robert's hand during his contest with the dog.

"Oh! pretty!" said the little fellow, and taking it to Helen, he said—"See, Elly, see papa!"

"Don't, darling," she said, gently pushing the child from her side. Quite as touchy as his Newfoundland friend, little Arthur turned away, saying—

"Elly cross—don't love Arty."

"Come, young gentleman," said Laura, rising; "it is time to go home; we have been here two hours, and I promised to go out with aunt. Farewell, friends. Will you be at home this evening, Helen?"

"No; to-night is Emma's literary soirée. I don't feel at all in a mood to be entertained by her learned guests, but, of course, I cannot send an apology."

"You will enjoy it exceedingly, I dare say. Mrs. Murray will be there; she is the very perfection of fine old ladies. I called on her, a few days ago, with aunt, for a

subscription. She was so liberal and kind! Her house is not as magnificent as Mrs. Grantly's, but there is an atmosphere of refinement and comfort about it which I often miss in the palaces of our aristocracy. Come, Arty, come: Robert, we expect you to dinner on Sunday."

"Where is my daguerreotype?" inquired the young man. "On the floor! What a shame! I will not let you see it any more; if I had brought you the likeness of Sir Archibald, or even his old uncle, you would have been in ecstasies about it. Good-morning, ladies."

"Now, Helen, you must lie down," said Alice Irving; "you look so tired."

"I have a very bad headache. Don't go, Alice. I cannot bear to be alone. Tell me all about Allan Dorsay, or any one else. Any thing you please."

"No, no! that won't do, just now. I have a great deal to attend to at home, and you must rest for this evening."

That was quite impossible, and, after Alice had gone, Helen put on her bonnet and went out.

Mr. Leeson had positively forbidden his daughter ever entering an omnibus; but, this time, the temptation was irresistible. It was empty, and, as it stopped beyond the Reservoir, Helen got out and walked some distance on the road. It was getting late—four o'clock by her watch. She retraced her steps toward the omnibus station. As she was within a short distance of it, an elderly gentleman came up to her, and said, in an abrupt manner—

"Miss Leeson, I believe?"

"Yes, sir," replied Helen, rather alarmed, and endeavouring to remember where she had met him. In a few minutes, however, she recalled that face, which was con-

nected with the great catastrophe—never to be forgotten. He continued in a hurried manner—

"My son is gone; I shall never see him again; and you are the cause of his leaving me to die alone. May the Lord forgive you!"

He disappeared; but those agonizing words rang in the young girl's ear for many an hour after she reached her home.

CHAPTER XVI.

EMMA GRANTLY was realizing her fondest dream for the last few weeks: to have a select literary party, to meet Professor Amory and her scientific friend, M. de Cerny. None but those whom the young girl considered worthy of such an enjoyment were to be invited; but Mrs. Grantly, judging wisely that ill nature might well misshape Emma's motive, and create a disagreeable feeling among her circle of intimate acquaintances, had extended the favour to several who would have felt the slight of an omission, but who certainly could not appreciate the *treat*, as Emma called it.

Consequently, Mrs. Horace Grantly, Mrs. Seyton, and Cora Dalton were there; and a very unsatisfactory evening it was to them. Although intelligent women, their minds had been trained in the pursuit of frivolous pleasures; never fed with that wholesome food—truth and knowledge, without which 'tis but a deformed stripling—they knew of no enjoyments but the vain pageantry of fashion. Mrs. Seyton whispered to Cora Dalton—as they sat inattentive listeners to a beautiful description given by Professor Amory, with graphic accuracy—

"What milk-and-water people these are!"

"I am so sleepy!" was the gaping answer.

"What were your first impressions of our country, M. de Cerny?" said Emma. "The New World must have

appeared very tame to you, who had so profoundly studied and pondered over the glorious ruins of past ages."

"Grand in the extreme!" answered the naturalist. "As you say, I had devoted many years to the study of Time's passage; but not merely among the wrecks of antiquity did I seek the knowledge which, of all others, has ever been to me the most attractive. In visiting Greece and Rome, it was not the spirits of the departed heroes whom my fancy evoked. Nor did I dwell in long meditations on the tombs which contained the crumbled remains of ancient grandeur and broken monarchies. No; Nature was my favourite theme—the object of my earnest investigations. From her I sought the meaning of many an obscure enigma, and from her I received answers far more satisfactory than the written records of bygone centuries.

"But there is, about the whole aspect of the Eastern hemisphere, an appearance of dilapidation and ruin which invariably fills the mind with gloom. It is the animated experience of ages, written in ineffaceable traces upon every hill—in every valley. The antique castle which hangs upon the silvery stream lends a noble but dark shadow to its waters. Some deed of iniquity must have rung through those deserted halls, and the echo of the forest still repeats to the excited imagination sounds of pain and wo.

"You can readily fancy how much one accustomed to those clouds ever passing over the scenery of the Old World, must enjoy the total absence of them in this country, where Nature has been so bountiful of her gifts; where she seems to have crowded them all, saying to the exhausted climes of Europe, 'Send, send thy children to my new home. Thou hast nurtured them long enough. I have prepared an Eden for them here, beyond the blue waters of the Atlantic!'"

"That is a beautiful fancy!" said Mrs. Murray, "and proud may an American be to own a home capable of eliciting such sentiments."

"America has ever been the chosen spot of the naturalist," continued Monsieur de Cerny; "the aim of all his toil, for in her bosom lay concealed treasures which science has revealed, but of which few traces remain in the continents of the East."

"You mean treasures of wildness, boundless prairies, and virgin forests, I suppose," said Emma.

Helen listened to the conversation with undisguised pleasure. Mrs. Horace Grantly and Cora Dalton had gone into an adjoining sitting-room, where a whist-party had met. Mrs. Seyton contrived to fascinate both Marvell and Mac Tavish, who devoted one ear to the lady, while the other eagerly caught the eloquent sounds which proceeded from the opposite side of the drawing-room, much to the annoyance of the little charmer, who admitted of no mixed power.

"Does not the absence of all links with the past strike you disagreeably in our country, Monsieur de Cerny?" asked Professor Amory.

"Not in the least, I assure you; it is a complete rest. But, professor, how did you, nurtured as you had been in the lap of Nature's bounty, view her fallen state in Asia and Africa? I think you told me you had travelled through those distant regions."

"Yes; and strange to say," replied Mr. Amory, "I experienced the same craving for the remaining mementos of the past that you felt for the budding beauties of this modern Eden, as you so beautifully term it. I had spent so many hours in mental contemplation of the relics of antiquity—nay, could almost see them as they stood in days

of yore—that the desire to study them on the spots hallowed by memory's treasures became an irresistible necessity. And still more strange will you think it, when I add that not one disappointment crossed my path during the many months which I devoted to the investigation of the ruins of departed centuries. It was with infinite delight that I visited Italy, Greece, Egypt, and explored every vestige of olden times. Those broken columns, those masses of shapeless rocks, spoke a language so solemn, so grand, so different from the new-born melodies of my native land! To me the towering spire of an Egyptian obelisk, even the crescent which crowns the mosque of the erring Mussulman, were surrounded with a halo of poetry and beauty which the matchless oaks of our forests never could possess.

"Thus it is, M. de Cerny, that our nature requires the contact, the contemplation of the unknown; habit divests our usual haunts of many charms, while novelty will frequently lend attractions to pursuits far beneath those to which we have been accustomed."

"True, very true," said Mrs. Henry Grantly; "and is it not a blessing? Without that thirst for knowledge, the international intercourse, from which all derive so much benefit, would not exist."

"Undoubtedly, dear madam. To that wise provision of Providence we are indebted for a great deal of enjoyment. I have had a large share; and to it we owe the pleasure of seeing M. de Cerny in America," continued the professor, with that affability of manner which made him such a favourite.

M. de Cerny bowed and smiled, saying—

"I would almost wish myself an inhabitant of the land of Socrates, to be able to return your gracious hospitality, professor."

"All this may be very fine, gentlemen," added Emma, smiling; "but tell me, both, whether there is not very great satisfaction to be derived from the improvements of modern civilization and all the luxuries which this prolific age has showered upon us?"

"We appreciate those advantages," replied Mr. Amory; "and certainly would not exchange the comforts of an American home for the gorgeous wrecks of antiquity. Neither would we devote all our days to study alone. There are many leisure hours which affection claims, when the toil is forgotten for the pure enjoyment of home duties. I am not of Byron's opinion, that a student is unfit for all domestic ties. 'Tis but the morbid mind that reasons thus, and admits not the beneficial influence of your sex, Miss Grantly."

"I thought you would not finish that beautiful speech without a slight homage to the ladies, professor," said Emma.

"Yes," added Mrs. Murray, "if gentlemen admitted the fact of our being worthy listeners, and sometimes not indifferent antagonists, I think our chances of acquiring knowledge would be more numerous; and perhaps," she continued, with a smile, "we might occasionally suggest some useful hints—a lighter tinge in the dark shades of your superior wisdom."

"Who would not be proud of such counsel?" replied Mr. Amory, who, like most others, was a devoted admirer of Mrs. Murray's genuine excellence.

"Helen," said Emma, "we have not once heard the sound of your voice, and still I know you must have shared our conversation mentally."

"Admiration does not always express itself in words," interrupted Mrs. Grantly. "I could see by Helen's look

of intense interest, that she followed these gentlemen in their scientific roamings."

"I did, indeed," replied the young girl; "and envy both the inexhaustible treasures of thought which their travels have afforded them."

"Treasures of thought!" repeated Mrs. Seyton. "Do you value those, Mr. Mac Tavish?"

"I appreciate all earthly and heavenly possessions," answered the young man, with one of those looks which gratify a coquette and annoy a modest woman.

"Will you allow me to show you some paintings which are considered very good, M. de Cerny? Professor, Mr. Grantly purchased two lately, which you have not seen," said the hostess.

The gentlemen rose and followed Mrs. Grantly and her daughter into a small gallery, which was fitted up with a great deal of taste, and which contained some valuable paintings.

"I was really indebted to your brother this morning, Miss Leeson. My son was so much engaged with his friend, that I felt at a loss to reach my carriage," said Mrs. Murray, who was sitting on the sofa near Helen.

"Robert told me he had had the pleasure of seeing you."

"Yes, I had not been in that part of the city since my return from Europe; but I could not bear to part with my young friend, Mr. Grey, without going down to the steamer to bid him farewell. Poor fellow! I shall miss him terribly! Were you acquainted with him, Miss Leeson?'

"No," answered the young girl, with a fluttering heart.

"Few knew him as I did," continued the old lady. "One day, when we are more private, I will tell you how I became acquainted with him. It is a long story. He is

such a noble fellow! The dear boy must be far from us now—so sad, so desolate! But excuse me, Miss Leeson. I had forgotten that you do not know Walter, and cannot take any interest in him."

"My brother thinks very highly of Mr. Grey," responded Helen. Then anxious to turn off the conversation, she took up a volume of the "Flowers Personified," which was on the table before her. "Are they not beautiful?" she added. "Such exquisite works of fancy!"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Murray. "One might suppose the goddess had stood before the artist, and had said, 'Thus shalt thou represent my children.' Oh! that Grandville was a wonderful genius. Such talent should never die."

"This little work, frivolous as it may appear, will immortalize him; for flowers are of all ages, of all times," said Helen.

"I have often thought," continued Mrs. Murray, "what a beautiful sight it would be to see these lovely children of Flora really animated—a ball, for instance, where every young lady would personate a flower. I would like you to wear the royal robes of the lily. If my dream can ever be realized, will you not appear in the character of the peerless queen?"

"I should be most happy to accept your kind invitation, but cannot promise to fill so illustrious a rank."

"Well, you may suit your fancy in that respect. I shall be gratified, I know, whatever your choice may be. But pray do not mention it until after Lent. I will then call upon Miss Emma and you for some essential advice. Old ladies, you know, have antiquated ideas; they need modernizing, very often."

"That is a conclusion I never should have arrived at in your society, Mrs. Murray," replied Helen, with a smile.

"Very kind and polite in you to say so; but truth is truth, and wrinkles are sure signs of age. I am fully aware of the fact, and do not entertain the slightest bitterness on the subject. But I am exceedingly fond of young society, and feel grateful for their toleration of my old-fashioned notions."

"If I had the pleasure of a longer acquaintance with you, dear lady," said Helen, "I think I should take the liberty of scolding you."

"That is exactly what poor Walter and my son have told me very often; but I am the best judge of my own worth. Oh! Sir Archibald and my Lord Devere!" added Mrs. Murray, as these gentlemen entered the parlour. "I give up my claim upon you, now, Miss Leeson, and will take up our chat another time, I hope."

"Mr. Horace Grantly, whom I had the pleasure of seeing to-day, requested me to call upon you, this evening, as I should meet your family circle," said his lordship, addressing Mrs. Grantly, who had just returned from the gallery with her guests.

"I am most happy to see you, my lord. I believe you are acquainted with these ladies. Emma, my dear, will you inform your father and your aunt of Lord Devere's being here. Sir Archibald, pray take this seat near Mrs. Seyton." But before the lady had finished her speech, the baronet had crossed the parlour, and was presenting his respects to Mrs. Murray and Helen with unequivocal satisfaction.

"You did not make a very long stay in Cuba," said the young girl, somewhat at a loss to find an unmeaning phrase.

"Much too long, I assure you. Such a stupid, uninteresting country! But I saw some very pretty women. The Spanish ladies have wonderful eyes—so large and black. I never could see any beauty in a blue eye."

Fortunately for the gentleman, this speech was uttered before Miss Dalton made her appearance; otherwise those blue orbs would have frowned a most terrific reproof upon the ungallant nobleman.

"You have no idea of the interest I have been taking in the whist-party, Helen," said Cora, as she walked up to the table, apparently unconscious of the young man's presence. He rose, and bowing awkwardly, exclaimed—

"Oh! Miss Dalton, how are you? I am so delighted to see you, and so happy to return to New York!"

"Now, if you want to have some fun, Mr. Marvell, watch the proceedings of those two ladies," whispered Mrs. Seyton.

"Mac Tavish maintains that Miss Leeson has never been in love," said Harry.

"That may be; but she would certainly like to captivate that sprig of nobility."

"Not a brilliant conquest, I am sure," rejoined Marvell; "but our ladies are extremely partial to foreigners."

"I have not found that to be the case," said Mac Tavish, who was still in search of his favourite fancy—a sensible woman. "Mrs. Murray, methinks," he added, "is acting rather an unsatisfactory part, over there."

Mac Tavish knew not that the old lady had made an attempt to rise as the nobleman came toward her, but a whispered "Pray don't go," had detained her; and, in fact, she proved a most valuable auxiliary, for Helen in her present state of mind was ill fitted to compete with the experienced and self-possessed Cora Dalton.

Most of the gentlemen had joined the card-party. It was half-past ten when Emma, who had been entertaining her aunt and Mrs. Seyton, rose to give some orders. A hurried glance at the clock betrayed some anxiety on the

part of the young girl, when the door opened, and Robert Leeson and Herman Smith made their appearance.

"How very late, gentlemen!" said the little hostess, going up to her guests.

"We owe you a thousand apologies, Miss Emma," said Herman; "but I was detained at the counting-house until a few moments ago, and I had requested Robert to call for me at nine o'clock. The poor fellow has been waiting ever since."

"You have missed such a treat from M. de Cerny and Professor Amory! but we will resume the conversation, I hope, at supper."

"Two belles for one beau on this side," whispered Mrs. Seyton, "and on the other two beaux for one belle. Now, Mr. Mac Tavish, pray hand me into the adjoining saloon—I have a great fancy for cards."

"Variety is the spice of life, fair lady," said the young man, as he gave the coquettish little widow a comfortable arm-chair near Lord Devere, and returned to the drawing-room, muttering, "We were getting a little tired of each other, and I cannot compete with his lordship's title and supposed wealth. Oh, women, women! you are all flirts! When shall I find a rational, sensible one?"

"Why so dejected, Mr. Mac Tavish?" inquired Emma, who had always retained her easy and affable manner toward the disappointed Eric.

"You know *too* well, Miss Grantly," sighed the young man.

Supper was announced—a cosy set supper—which all enjoyed, as the good cheer was accompanied by wit and refinement. The scientific gentlemen were requested to recall some poetical souvenirs, and Mrs. Seyton not being able to monopolize one admirer, made several brilliant at-

tempts to captivate all. Cora Dalton and Emma were not behindhand in sparkling repartee, and the indispensable share of sound sense and mature reflection was furnished by Mrs. Murray and Mrs. Grantly.

Helen and her aunt were the only silent ones. The latter was inadequate to the task of entertaining such literary people, and the former, crushed in spirit, sighed for the hour which would restore her to solitude.

In vain the young nobleman endeavoured to obtain a few words in return for the volley of eloquence which he had accumulated for many days past, for the express benefit of his lady-love, as he presumptuously termed Helen.

At twelve o'clock, the company retired; not, however, until Mrs. Grantly had obtained from her guests the promise of meeting again at her house in a few weeks.

"Next time, pray manage your affairs so as to be here earlier, Mr. Smith," said Emma, as she shook hands with Herman. "Good-night, Robert!"

"Let me offer you a seat in my carriage, Miss Leeson," said Mrs. Murray. "Your aunt has a long drive to take, and you know we are neighbours."

Helen accepted, and was thankful to the dear old lady who so kindly entertained her on her way home, without expecting much in return.

"Come to me in a few days, Miss Leeson—do. It will be conferring so much pleasure upon a poor lonely old woman!"

"Oh, call me Helen," said the young girl, as she pressed her companion's hand.

"I will. Good-night, dear child!"

CHAPTER XVII.

TIME, that great leveller of all human events, brought very little change in poor Helen's prospects. Her position had become almost unbearable; for besides the inward workings of her distracted mind, she had to contend with the increasing importunity of her father and aunt to favour the suit of the English nobleman. Mr. Leeson and his sister felt it was an object of vital importance, and while the cunning lady of fashion contrived sundry meetings between the young people, the more arbitrary father expressed his views of the matter openly and with unrestrained violence.

"Is it possible, Helen, that you should not see the necessity of grasping such an opportunity?" said the excited man. "Why do you reject so desirable an offer? Sir Archibald waits but a favourable moment to declare himself; and your manner is so cold and repulsive that he will, I know, give it up entirely."

"Father, father! ask me not why, but, for mercy's sake, urge me not to do a thing which is impossible!"

"Impossible! why so? Are you attached to any one else? Answer me."

"No; but I cannot marry Sir Archibald."

"Then, you may live to be a beggar—foolish, silly girl! When this marriage would save you from so much suffering, so much agony, you cannot sacrifice your feelings! Well, let the worst come to the worst. *I* shall not see it!" And

the wretched father rushed out of the room, leaving Helen miserable—rebellious against the awful decree which had blighted her hopes in so mysterious a manner.

In those moments of anguish, Laura was the only one who could heal the aching spirit. She knew so well how to calm the violent and sinful irritation which these discussions between Helen and her father usually brought on. And kind Aunt Seraph was always such a judicious and mild mediator between the offended parent and the refractory child. But these domestic differences produced a bitterness of feeling which all suffered from. Robert became more dissipated than ever; and the poor mother, broken-hearted and almost in despair, spent many a sleepless night, brooding over present cares and anticipating still greater evils.

Lent, which proved a season of real penance to the care-worn members of Helen's family, passed away, as all things do in this land of trial. Its nominal restraint upon the worldly had been somewhat of a comfort to the young girl, for the opportunities of going into society were much less frequent, and consequently she was less often exposed to meeting the young Englishman whose attentions had become so painful to her.

Time had closed over the holy anniversary of the blessed sacrifice which purchased heaven for the guilty sinner in so divine a manner. All had bowed in respectful—would that we could say pious—acknowledgment of the inestimable boon. And as the joyous peals poured forth the announcement of the Redeemer's resurrection, all, most all, wended their way toward the temple of the living God. Hosannas, hallelujahs, rang in sublime melodies through the crowded churches, where the proud and the humble joined in one universal homage to the Father of all.

Robert Leeson owned a pew in Grace Church, and on Easter Sunday it was occupied by the whole family. But, although the praises of the Most High were on the lips of those who knelt in that holy sanctuary, still there was a bitterness of feeling in the inmost recesses of their hearts, which was visible only to the Omniscient eye. There reigned not within those bosoms the peace which he had won for them!

As Helen left the church, she met Mrs. Murray, who whispered, hurriedly—"Will you devote an hour to me, to-morrow morning, Miss Leeson? Emma will meet you at eleven o'clock."

"Most willingly, dear madam," was the only answer, for Mr. Marvell and Sydney Morris joined the belle and escorted her to her residence, or rather to Miss Marsy's, where the family dinner-party was to be given.

What a display of fashion, elegant bonnets and fine dresses, smiling faces and joyful greetings, emerged from the different churches! A living mass of satisfaction; and if there were any shades to the human picture, they were not visible by the rays of that bright March sun.

The meeting at Aunt Seraph's was not as it had been in days of yore. Laura, weak and pale, though making every effort to appear cheerful, was unable to assist her aunt in the many little details of the entertainment, and the guests, with the exception of Anna and Herman Smith, were ill-fitted for the enjoyment of the simple and light-hearted jokes such gatherings generally call forth.

In short, the afternoon and evening hung heavily upon all; and at an early hour Aunt Seraph and Laura were the only inmates of the hospitable mansion.

"You look so tired, darling," said the anxious friend, as she gazed on the pale features of the young countess.

"This constant cough annoys me, but I have no fever."

"Laura," said Miss Marsy, with a slight effort, as though gathering strength for the painful task, "how would you like to go to Europe in the spring? To visit all those interesting countries, and spend some time in Paris?"

"Oh! I should be delighted!" exclaimed the young widow. "Only think of my seeing Italy, the birthplace of my poor Arthur. The sacred spot where the beloved one lies!" she continued, while the tears fell fast. "I think nothing would do me so much good."

"Well, we must go, then, and Helen must accompany us. The poor child is sadly changed; she, too, requires a new life—a rest from the empty dissipation of this place. I will mention it to her in a few days."

Long did both sit that evening, and talk over their plans for the trip which was to bring so much pleasure. Laura's eyes beamed with hope, and the bright, flushed cheek soon betrayed the nervous excitement within that frail being. Poor Aunt Seraph suppressed the sigh which rose to her lips as she watched the well-known symptoms of the unconquerable evil. But hers had been a life of self-denial; one long hour of devotion to the loved ones. She dreamed not of self; the feeling was unknown to that pure spirit of charity and affection.

"Is Mrs. Murray at home?" asked our heroine on the following morning, as she entered the beautiful residence of the kind old lady.

"Yes, ma'am," said the waiter, "but a little engaged just now with a poor woman in distress. Please to walk into the library? Madam will be down in a few minutes —she expects Miss Leeson."

Accordingly Helen was ushered into the little retreat,

which had been adorned by Mrs. Murray and her son with valuable collections of books and works of art. The dark oak which covered the walls was sculptured in antique models, and the heavy dark-green velvet curtains which hung from the oak cornice gave it that peculiar appearance of comfort and elegance which has in many establishments rendered the library the favourite resort for the lovers of peace and quiet enjoyment.

Helen sat in an arm-chair near the fire, and after remaining a few moments absorbed in thought, she took up an album which was on the table near her. It contained many beautiful sketches of American scenery, drawn by the hand of an artist. And as she turned over the pages, she saw several views of England, and here and there a reflection beneath the various souvenirs which had been pencilled above.

"Ah! my dear child!" said Mrs. Murray, as she came in, and shook hands with Helen in her usual cordial manner, "I am glad to find you thus engaged. That is an album which I value most highly—all drawings by my friend Walter. The last ones he sent me from England, with such a kind, affectionate letter! I was so delighted to hear of his safe arrival! Now that we are alone, I will tell you all about him. Emma sent me word she could not be here before twelve o'clock, and I was selfish enough not to mention it, that I might have you all to myself for a little while. But tell me, first, how you are, and take off that pretty bonnet—let me see you quite at home. Is not this a nice little place?"

"Charming!" replied the young girl, trembling at the prospect of the subject with which the unconscious hostess intended to entertain her guest. Fortunately, the faint light which reigned in the library concealed the changes

which Helen's countenance betrayed during that dreaded conversation.

"I shall have to tell you a little about myself," continued Mrs. Murray,—"a subject which I would rather avoid, as it recalls painful remembrances of anguish. You may, perhaps, have heard from your aunt, Miss Marsy, whom I had the pleasure of knowing in the days of my youth and happiness, that mine was a bright fate for several years after my marriage. My husband was the best, the kindest of earthly protectors, and his love proved an ample compensation for the loss of a home where I had been an only and idolized child. For five or six years, no cloud dimmed the brilliant vista. Four little ones, nearly of a size, were growing up around us, and added new joys to our peaceful existence. But a terrible day of trial was at hand. I lost my husband; and scarcely six months had elapsed, when the divine messenger claimed the three darlings whose smiles had been my only comfort in that agonizing bereavement! They died, in one week, of the measles! My George was the only one spared to bind me to this sad life. He was the oldest, and even at that early age proved the support of my waning strength. Alas!"

"Dear friend!" interrupted Helen, as she clasped the hand of the poor mother.

"Yes," continued Mrs. Murray, "I felt that Providence had spared my boy, that I might not die of despair! But it was long, very long, before my rebellious spirit would bend in submissive resignation, and acknowledge the blessing which remained to point out the path to heaven. Often, since I have grown older and have acquired experience, have I knelt in humble gratitude to the Divine Wisdom which spared the three angels so much pain and care! I feel for them a security which cannot exist in this land of

trials and temptation. I know they are at rest, pure and holy, in the presence of the Saviour! But why should I thus unfold to your young heart the dark pages of the world's trials? Forgive me, and let me tell you at once about Walter. I love to talk of the kind young man—almost a second son to me!

"About five years ago, I was spending the summer at Saratoga with George. We had taken one of the cottages, which afforded me all the comforts of a quiet home. I emerged from it often, however, to enjoy the sweets of society, which I felt were beneficial to my health and spirits. I had met, of course, many acquaintances, and one of my favourite pleasures was to have a meeting of my young friends at the cottage—merry parties and cozy suppers, which all seemed to enjoy. We had been at Saratoga several weeks, when George was taken ill of a fever, which I thought slight at first, but when, a day or two afterward, finding that it did not abate, I sent for the physician, he told me my son was very ill; and, in fact, in a few hours he was covered with a rash, which turned out to be the measles. You can easily imagine my agony—my despair! The very mention of the fatal disease sounded like the knell of death, and at once I thought all was over—that God would take from me my only joy—my only hope. I procured a nurse in the village, and for two or three nights I sat up with the dear invalid. On the fourth day, exhausted, both mentally and physically, I had gone into the parlour adjoining my son's room, leaving the door open, when the bell rang, and a gentleman, a perfect stranger to me, made his appearance, without waiting to be announced.

"'Mrs. Murray,' he said, 'I arrived at Saratoga this afternoon, and heard of George's being ill. We were at

school together for many years, and have always been intimate. I think he would not object to my sitting up with him to-night, and allowing you to take a little rest. Pray accept my services: I have no dread of the disease, and having nursed my poor mother for many months, can be trusted with perfect security.'

"I remonstrated with the friend who thus came to my assistance; and not being willing to contract so great an obligation, I had politely refused his offer, when my son, who had overheard the conversation, called me to his bedside.

"'Mother,' he said, 'let Walter sit up with me, and do go to bed. I want to have him: he is an excellent fellow.'

"I dared not oppose George's wish, and although I persisted in spending the night in the sick-room, still it was the greatest comfort to me to have the company and judicious care of the young man. For ten nights he did not leave my poor boy, who, thanks to the doctor's skill, or, I should say, to the mercy of the Divine Ruler, who 'tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,' was restored to me. It was a glorious day that, upon which George entered the little drawing-room, leaning on Walter's arm, smiling upon my happy countenance, and the many flowery tokens which I had collected to celebrate his convalescence. Walter was quite ill after George's recovery, but I knew nothing of it, for he left Saratoga the day after my son was able to drive out.

"Of course, when I returned to the city, my first thought was to send for the friend to whom I was so much indebted. I did every thing in my power to discover the cause of that unusual melancholy which seemed to be almost natural to Walter, and which six months ago increased tenfold. I

thought that some embarrassment in his business might occasion that sadness, and would have given half of my fortune to assist the poor boy. But George assured me that he was doing very well, and that he had a wealthy bachelor uncle, who, for many years past, had supported his father, much to Walter's annoyance, and who would probably leave him the whole of his property. What, then, could be the matter with our young friend? At twenty-seven, one may possibly be in love; and I was convinced of it at last. About two months ago, one day, as I reached home rather late in the afternoon, my waiter, Benjamin, told me that Mr. Grey was in the library. As he dined with us once or twice a week, we did not consider him a stranger, and I usually left him to entertain himself until the dinner-hour. However, having forgotten a book which I was reading on this table, I thought I would step in for it, and gently raised the curtain which hangs over the door. Walter sat where you are sitting now, apparently absorbed in thought. It was too dark to distinguish his features, but I heard him mutter, with an expression of anguish not easily forgotten, 'Oh! shall I never call her mine?' I dropped the curtain softly, and having hastily changed my dress, I returned to the library to sit with Walter, hoping to divert his thoughts, or, perhaps, discover the secret which caused his melancholy; but in vain. He spoke of our sex in a strange, wild manner, saying," added Mrs. Murray, smiling, "that he knew but one worthy of affection, and that was myself. Puzzled, and anxious to bring comfort and happiness to one to whom I owed so much, I communicated my conjectures to my son, with the hope that he might find an explanation to the words which I had overheard. But he was no wiser than myself. We knew that Walter visited in no family except

ours, and even refused to come here when we expected company. I have never been able to solve the mystery, and regret it deeply, for it would have given me infinite pleasure to see him happy; and his is a heart which any woman might be proud of possessing. But, dear child, how cold your hand is! I have fatigued you with this long story, which I thought might be interesting, as your brother is one of Walter's best friends. Let me give you a little cordial," and the old lady rang the bell.

"I am perfectly well," said Helen, making a terrible effort to conceal her emotion, which had been increasing in a painful manner since the beginning of Mrs. Murray's narrative.

"No, no! You look ill. I suppose you were up late, last evening, and perhaps require some nourishment. It is twelve o'clock. Let me take you into the dining-room. Lunch must be ready, and Miss Grantly will be here in a few minutes."

Helen rose, and mechanically followed the hostess. But she could eat nothing; and both ladies returned to the library, where they were soon joined by Emma, in high spirits and delighted with the idea of the flower-ball.

"I am so glad to see you!" said Mrs. Murray; "for I very foolishly entertained this sensitive little friend of mine with a long and gloomy story, which has given her the blues."

"It may have made me sad, but it was certainly very interesting," said Helen.

"Well, now, we will drop those souvenirs," continued Mrs. Murray, "and think only of making Flora's daughters smile, dance, and flirt, in the most becoming manner. You have a brilliant imagination, Emma; pray, give us the benefit of it."

"All the glory of this novel and beautiful idea lies with you," said Emma, smiling. "I never should have thought of it."

"Perhaps the execution may appear difficult to us," replied Mrs. Murray; "but the very fact of its not being easily accomplished will render it tenfold more charming. Now, Helen, what flower will you choose?"

"Oh! think not of me—it is of very little importance."

"Here is the book, and Benjamin will light the gas, for it is terribly dark everywhere, to-day. Now, let me see—I will select a dress for each of you, and you must abide by my decision. I think I know you sufficiently well to animate your respective dispositions. Oh! here is the very thing! Look, Emma! Don't you think Helen, as she sits there so pensive, so sad, resembles this Pensée, or Heart's-ease; or, still more properly speaking, Flower of Thought?"

"Exactly," exclaimed Miss Grantly. "Don't say a word, Elly; it is perfect."

"Very well; I will personate the Pensée," said Helen, smiling, "and try my best to keep up the character."

"Judging from present appearances," said Emma, "that will not be very difficult. Now please, Mrs. Murray, allow me to choose my own robes," she added. "There is one which suits me in every respect. Here it is—the Violet."

"How humble! how modest!" exclaimed the old lady.

"Do you not value its sweet perfume? I think, on the contrary, that my selection betrays a great deal of vanity—I do, indeed. Now, it must be so; I know exactly how it will look—so pretty and becoming," added the sweet girl, while Helen could not help envying Emma's bright nature, which beamed on all around her.

"I will have the parlours decorated with flowers," said

Mrs. Murray; "and none except the mammas will be admitted without one of the dresses which Grandville has assigned to the fair inmates of our gardens. Now, ladies," she added, "I have a secret to confide to you, which you must promise never to reveal, and which I cannot very well execute without your assistance. I believe you are rather intimate with little Grace Orland, Miss Emma; are you not?"

"Oh! very intimate. She is such a modest, unassuming girl, and so talented. You have lost sight of her, I think, Helen, of late."

"Yes," responded her friend, as she remembered Mrs. Grantly's uncharitable remarks about the Orlands; "I have only seen her once or twice—at our house, and here, I believe, one morning."

"Well," continued Mrs. Murray, "I think very highly of Mrs. Orland, who has borne the sad reverses of fortune in a meek and Christianlike manner, comforting her poor husband with words of consolation and a cheerful spirit, which the unfortunate man was greatly in need of. Her daughter, too, has shown a great deal of character, forgetting her own disappointments and bitter deceptions to be all-in-all to her parents and sisters. I admire Grace exceedingly, and would be very happy to afford her some pleasure. I know she will not be able to come to the ball unless a dress is provided for her, and I would like to have it all made, and send it a few days beforehand, ready to put on. Now, Miss Emma, what can you suggest?"

"This time I can serve you most effectually. My dressmaker has worked for Mrs. Orland for many years. She can make the costume without Grace's knowledge, and the surprise will be complete."

"Delightful! I knew you were a capital counsellor.

Helen must do the rest, and select the dress for our little friend. Here is the book, fair lady."

"I should think she would look sweetly as the Daisy—so simple, so pure!"

"Yes, that will do very well, and I shall enjoy the poor child's surprise. But, remember, not one word to any one about this fancy of mine. Ah, Benjamin! what have you there—a note?" continued Mrs. Murray, opening the scented billet. "Cards from Mrs. Coverley, from Miss Olivia; and here is Mr. Dobbins. What a name! Think you as Shakspeare does on the subject, Miss Emma?"

"Not exactly; although I must confess that a common name does not depreciate a person's character in my eyes," responded the young girl, blushing.

"We came here to be of some use to you, dear madam," said Helen, "and I do not see that we have at all advanced matters. This will, I fear, give you considerable fatigue and annoyance."

"You do not know my mother, Miss Leeson," said George Murray, who overheard Helen's remark as he entered the library. "Ladies, your most obedient; can I be admitted to this illustrious confab?"

"Yes, if you can suggest any thing graceful and pretty," said his mother; "I am pursuing my fancy for a ball composed of flowers, personified by our blooming belles."

"A difficult thing to accomplish, my dear mother."

"Why so? If they look sweetly here in their white draperies covered with leaves and flowers, why should they not be a thousand times more beautiful when really animated?"

"I have not the slightest objection, and will greatly appreciate this novel parterre. May I ask what your selections have been, young ladies?"

"Oh, that is a secret!" exclaimed Emma. "You are to remain in total darkness on the subject."

"Yes, George; you may take charge of the decorations and supper, and provide showers of flowers for the occasion," said Mrs. Murray.

"That is unwise in you, for we surely cannot pretend to compete with the genuine daughters of Flora," added Helen, smiling.

"The rose will blush at the contact, Miss Leeson, and the lily turn deathly pale, most certainly."

"Come, Mr. Flatterer, that is all very fine," interrupted Mrs. Murray, "but you must attend to my favourite dream immediately. I will send out the invitations to-morrow, and in two weeks the flowers, personified, will honour us with their presence."

"What! so late already!" said Emma. "You have been so entertaining that, were it not for this telltale on the mantel-piece, I should never have thought of the hour. Now, do not scruple to send for me or this pensive friend of mine, if we can be of the slightest use to you. I will write to Mrs. Martin, the dress-maker, in a few days. Helen, where is your bonnet? You lazy child! one would suppose you could not make up your mind to leave that comfortable chair!"

"That was Walter's favourite seat," observed Mr. Murray. "By-the-by, mother, in his last letter, he says that he will send you the little statue you spoke of."

"Another fancy of mine, which I must tell you about the next time I have the pleasure of seeing you; and then I hope to be more entertaining, Miss Leeson."

"You had promised to drop that formal title."

"I had forgotten it. Old people are apt to forget, you know? Farewell! and many thanks for the pleasure your

visit has procured me. George, at what o'clock will you be home?"

"As soon as I have escorted these ladies."

Kind Mrs. Murray claimed a kiss from her young friends; and after they had left she wrote a note to Miss Orland, which brought the young girl at five o'clock for dinner, after which both ladies, assisted by George Murray, in excellent spirits, sat down to write the invitations for the ball.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GREAT was the excitement created among the élite of the fashionables by the announcement of Mrs. Murray's novel entertainment, and many were the consultations among the ladies who were expected to animate their lovelier sisters, the gems of creation. But woman's vanity is daring and energetic; it dreads not the rival charms of the rose nor the splendour of the camelia or geranium; the only hesitation was as to which would be the most becoming. All the flower-artists were called upon to furnish the materials for these new fancy dresses, and many hours were devoted to the execution of Mrs. Murray's floral innovation.

While these preparations were going on to the infinite delight of the belles, all were compelled to forget them a short time to call upon the fair Olivia; or rather the newly-married Mrs. Dobbins, who, as usual in our society, sported her rich lace veil and orange-blossoms a few days after her wedding to receive her friends.

It was a large reception, crowded to Mrs. Coverley's great satisfaction, who, while she was bestowing her only daughter on an insignificant millionaire with perfect unconcern, would have been truly miserable if her reception had not proved one of the most brilliant of the season.

Helen and her aunt were there, of course; in fact, all our acquaintances—the fashionable ones, we mean; for we have the privilege of knowing and appreciating all—rich and poor, young and old.

"What a treat it is to see you once more, Miss Leeson!" said Mac Tavish. "Methinks a whole century of penance has hung over us since we last met, and you look as though you had been very pious during that holy season of Lent."

"Take care, Mr. Mac Tavish!" responded Helen, smiling; "I shall be on my guard, and say, as the young Scotch girls did, that you are too wise."

"I am wise, indeed," he replied, with a strange expression; "and will tell you something that will make you start, next Tuesday, at Mrs. Murray's ball."

"Why not now? You have excited my curiosity; why not gratify it immediately?"

"Because I might be mistaken. Oh! Marvell, is that you? Have you seen the groom? Six feet and a few inches, I am sure; and so much in love! It is comical! Pretty women must be very scarce in India."

"Very scarce everywhere. Why so silent, Miss Helen? Has this prophet been trying his science upon you again? He made such a mistake the other day, I thought he would not be tempted to renew the trial."

"Mistake! My dear fellow, you are labouring under a complete delusion. But that is of no consequence whatever, just now. On such occasions as these, one is bound to think of nothing else but the brilliant prospects of the bride, who is going, it appears, on a wedding tour to Niagara, and in a few weeks will leave for Europe. Would you not enjoy a visit abroad, Miss Leeson?"

"Exceedingly; but I have no hope of ever realizing that dream. Good-morning, Sir Archibald," added Helen, in answer to the nobleman's respectful bow. Gladly would she have avoided the meeting, but the crowd was so great at that moment that it was impossible to circulate. The

bride was literally crushed with friendly congratulations, and the weight of them, or some secret annoyance, contracted her brow in a most unbecoming manner. Perhaps it was the repeated mention of Sir Archibald Courtnay's euphonious title which made her own newly-acquired name sound still more discordantly; or, perhaps, the "Now, Olivia, you will be completely worn out with all this fuss," whispered by the anxious husband, caused that look of concern to settle on the countenance thus exposed to the gaze of all—charitable and ill-natured. Sad to say, the latter *sometimes* predominate, and our friends Mac Tavish, Marvell, and many others, who had at one time paid their homage to Miss Coverley, were not slightly pleased to discover that, after all, she had made a poor bargain; or, we should say, an uncongenial match. All wedding-receptions bear a strong resemblance to each other, and, as most of our readers are well acquainted with the usual routine followed on such occasions, we will leave Mrs. Dobbins in her travelling dress, bidding farewell to her fond mother and a few intimate friends, and starting with her husband for a téte-à-téte of six weeks. Let us seek less exciting and more soothing emotions.

It was nine o'clock the night previous to Mrs. Murray's ball. In a small but neatly-furnished parlour sat Mr. and Mrs. Orland and their daughter. The four little ones had been sent to bed.

Mr. Orland was reading. The care-worn look of the stricken man told a sad tale of anguish; but hope still beamed in that fine eye, in that noble countenance; and now and then the father would look up from his book, to cast a hurried glance at the fair young creature—his beloved child—who sat apparently occupied by her work alone, so intense was the abstraction. Mrs. Orland—the

once wealthy lady of fashion, but, under all circumstances, the self-sacrificing woman—had proved worthy of the trust Providence had placed in her. She had been the angel of hope and peace to her agonized husband, and had cheerfully accepted the new life which God had assigned to her.

That evening, Mrs. Orland was busily employed in mending her children's garments, cutting out new ones, and superintending the inexperience of her daughter, who, like many others, had never attempted to learn any of those little domestic talents which, in some parts of Europe, form an essential branch of education. Grace was just seventeen, fond of gayety and society; and one of the poor mother's great trials had been to deprive her daughter of the pleasures she so longed for. Several times Mrs. Murray had taken charge of the young girl, but so many disappointments—nay, humiliations—had crossed the poor child's path, that she had finally given up going to balls, where she could not appear in the same extravagant dresses as her former companions.

"Grace, dear, are you ill?" said Mrs. Orland, who watched the quivering lip and tearful eyes of her daughter.

"No, mother; only a little tired. You know I spent several hours at Mrs. Murray's this morning, arranging the flowers with George; we had a fine time, but it was rather fatiguing. I wish you would go around there to-morrow, to look at the parlours. They are superb, and the ball will be magnificent," added the young girl as the tear fell on her work.

"Don't think of it, dear; balls are such empty, insignificant enjoyments!"

"To you, mother, perhaps; but to me a ball is every thing that is beautiful and agreeable! That is, it used to be!"

The father sighed, and both mother and daughter were silent for some time.

The bell rang, and the servant girl hastily opening the door, admitted Benjamin, Mrs. Murray's colored man, who deposited a large box at Miss Orland's feet, saying—

"Missus sends her compliments, with this box, and much love to Miss Grace, and hopes Mr. and Mrs. Orland are well."

"Very well, Benjamin; many thanks to Mrs. Murray: my daughter will go to see her to-morrow morning."

The grinning and delighted Benjamin left the room.

"Grace, why do you not open that box?" added Mr. Orland, as he laid down his book, convinced that Mrs. Murray's present would afford his daughter great satisfaction.

She hesitated, and burst into tears.

There is a strong kindred feeling between the noble hearts of this world. The young girl knew at once that the kind friend had sent her the means of realizing her fond wish—of appearing in a suitable dress at the ball on the following evening.

"Well, then, I shall have to look," said the happy mother; and raising the lid of the box, she displayed to the eyes of the weeping girl, the robes of the Daisy which Helen had selected, and which Madame Martin had imitated most accurately with gauzes, ribbons, and leaves.

"How beautiful!" exclaimed the delighted Grace.

"Exquisite!" said the father; "Mrs. Murray is a friend, indeed."

"Here is a note for you, darling; read it to us," continued Mrs. Orland.

She read with a tremulous voice—

"My own little Grace:

"I could not have enjoyed my flower-ball without your

sweet self. Pray come to me to-morrow in your usual character—the Daisy. Truly yours,

ANNE MURRAY."

"Mother! mother! can any thing be more kind and thoughtful?" exclaimed the young girl as she pressed the little note to her lips.

Tears glistened in Mr. Orland's eyes as he said—

"Adversity is a valuable microscope; through it we discover the real feelings of all toward us."

The next morning, as soon as Grace had attended to the little home duties which she shared with her mother in cheerful contentment, she put on her bonnet, and went to Mrs. Murray's.

The old lady was at breakfast with her son. A smile appeared on her benignant countenance as the young girl entered.

"Dear, dear friend!" said Miss Orland. "Did you think that I would personate the Daisy, here, this evening, without thanking you first as modest little Grace?"

"I am indebted to you, darling. You cannot imagine how delighted I have been to have the dress all ready without your knowing it. Does it fit well? Madame Martin made it."

"It fits beautifully. I tried it on last evening. It is so becoming! Oh," she added, blushing, "Mr. George, I forgot you were there. Now, don't laugh at me, please."

"Why not? My laughing makes you blush, and that is so pretty, you know!"

"I don't! Indeed, it is very ridiculous."

"Have you had breakfast, dear child?" asked Mrs. Murray, who was one of those hostesses in constant dread of their guests not meeting with a welcome sufficiently bountiful.

"Oh! long ago. I am an early riser now; the boys have gone to school, and I helped mother in her housekeeping."

"Well, then, don't wait here for me. George, take her into the parlour, and show her the result of your last night's labour."

Grace spent an hour assisting Mrs. Murray in various final arrangements, and then consented to go home to take a nap previous to the fatigues of the evening.

CHAPTER XIX.

NUMEROUS were the fluttering hearts and joyful anticipations on the night of Mrs. Murray's ball; and at the usual *ridiculous* hour, Flora's children, with smiling countenances and graceful airs, came tripping into the splendid drawing-rooms, which had been decorated with infinite taste and elegance for their reception. Not one jewel, not one diamond, sparkled upon the flowers personified. All those glittering ornaments had been crowded upon the mammas, whose dark velvets and satins formed a beautiful shade to the brilliant picture.

Mrs. Murray received her guests with her usual grace and dignity, bestowing upon each a word of praise and thanks for their willing contribution to the accomplishment of her original idea, which stood without a parallel in the annals of fashion.

"Good-evening, noble Lily," said the hostess, addressing Mrs. Seyton, who bowed in solemn grandeur, and then turning suddenly to Mr. Morris and several others, said—"Pray, gentlemen, spare my train."

The gorgeous Tulip—Miss Cora Dalton—then appeared, and obtained many most flattering compliments.

Augusta Waring wore the bewitching colours of the Pomegranate.

Julia Elvington personated the queen of flowers—the Rose.

It would be impossible to describe all these delicate and fanciful productions. The idea of the poet and artist had

been carried out as accurately as possible. All had copied Grandville's creations, and the effect was exquisite—far more beautiful than any fancy ball.

There were showers of smiling Pink and White Roses; Geraniums of various shades; Honeysuckles; Camelias, white and variegated; the gorgeous Dahlias, and the simple, eccentric Wild Rose. The Orange-blossom, in its pure white robes; and even the Narcissus had been selected by one or two young ladies, who had forgotten, or had never known, the fate of the unfortunate youth.

The fair wearers of nature's choicest charms were borne around the dancing-room in strange contrast with each other. Well might it have been said of them what Gavarni so beautifully expresses of such an assembly—

"A ball is a basket of ribbons and gauzes, intermingled with flowers—fresh, faded, and artificial; among which flutter a swarm of black butterflies by the light of a thousand candles!"

What would the poet have said, could he have seen the flowers themselves carried away by the black butterflies and keeping time to the delightful music?

And where was Helen in that brilliant crowd?

Eleven o'clock had struck, and she had not yet made her appearance. As Robert was to escort his sister, Mrs. Grantly had come without her niece, resplendent with diamonds, and attired in her most elegant ball-dress. Lord Devere, after paying his tribute of admiration to many of Flora's children, had claimed a seat near Mrs. Grantly, inquiring in a particular manner about Miss Leeson.

"Indeed, my lord, I am quite uneasy. It is very late," answered the lady.

"Yes, and my nephew is disconsolate. We anticipated

so much pleasure in seeing your beautiful niece in her new character!"

"Helen, my dear, what has kept you so late?" inquired Mrs. Murray, as she came forward to meet her young friend, who entered the parlour, followed by Robert.

"Father has been very ill all day. He is rather better just now, or I should not have left him," replied our heroine, whose pale countenance spoke of anxious hours and care.

But that very paleness increased Helen's matchless beauty, as she stood arrayed in the mysterious attributes of the Pensée or Heartsease.

She wore a long flowing robe of white crape, gathered around the waist by a green girdle, from which hung, without any symmetry, leaves and sprigs of the plant. The upper part of the waist was partially concealed by a large Heartsease, made of purple velvet and gold-coloured satin. The sleeves were looped up with a smaller flower, and to the shoulders were attached delicate gossamer wings. A single Pensée was placed as a ferronnière on Helen's dark hair, giving her countenance a peculiar character of melancholy and pensiveness, which was remarkably in harmony with her classical features.

"Thought, how exquisite thou art!" would have exclaimed the artist, could he have beheld the personification of his poetical fancy.

Helen was soon surrounded by a bevy of admirers, all anxious to obtain a look, a smile, or the more valued boon of a polka or redowa from the reigning belle.

"I do not dance this evening, Mr. Marvell. That would not be in keeping with my character," said Helen.

"What is more active, more quick, than thought?" answered the disappointed Harry.

"Thought flies, Mr. Marvell, but it does not dance."

"How cruel!" exclaimed Sir Archibald. "Is it possible, Miss Leeson, that you intend making us all miserable this evening?"

"All! I am not vain enough to fancy myself possessed of such power, Sir Archibald."

"Oh! who does not acknowledge that power?" whispered the nobleman, while the young girl turned from his amorous gaze to meet her friend, Emma Grantly, saying—

"You were right, dearest; this is a sweetly pretty dress you have chosen. These dark purple petals are so becoming to your light hair, and that noble heart of yours lies so well concealed beneath the modest foliage of the violet! Where is Grace? I have not seen her."

"Over there, dancing with young Dallas, who seems to think very highly of the little Daisy," said Miss Grantly. "The dress is very becoming, but yours, Helen, is the most perfect here."

"I assure you that it was with a heavy heart that I consented to wear it this evening. Father is quite ill. The doctor could not tell what was the matter with him. Poor mother is very much alarmed; and Laura has been so complaining that aunt is most anxious about her. Trouble on all sides! It unfits you for such scenes as these."

"Yes, but is not this a wonderful sight? I never would have supposed it could be accomplished with such perfection. We are greatly indebted to Mrs. Murray;" and Emma left her friend, to dance with Sydney Morris, after which she devoted a few moments to an agreeable conversation with M. de Cerny and Professor Amory, both great admirers of the animated flowers.

"May I pay homage to the royal Lily?" asked Marvell,

occupying the seat which Allan Dorsay had just vacated, near the coquettish little widow.

"Yes," replied the garden sovereign, "if it is an entertaining one. I never could tolerate a stupid subject."

"Your majesty is fastidious, we all know, and many a fine speech has been tortured by the sighing vassal before it was considered worthy of being spoken."

"You were a long time composing that one, Mr. Marvell," added Mrs. Seyton, laughing. "You, the very perfection of fashionable oratory!"

"Wicked as a queen, wicked as a woman; but so bewitching with this regal diadem! Is it not so, Mac Tavish?"

"Of course! But why repeat what all know so well?"

"Because one never tires of hearing it," answered Marvell. "Have you noticed Miss Cora's turban? Her dress is magnificent—a really glittering Tulip; but I do not admire the selection. Oh! give me that exquisite little Daisy, over there; or Miss Grantly's simple dress; or rather Miss Leeson's sublime personification!"

"She is beautiful, no doubt, but a perfect statue, as though she said, 'Here I am; admire me!'" said Mrs. Seyton, who, like many others, was rather annoyed by Helen's supremacy in the field of fascination.

"She need not say it," replied Marvell. "All acknowledge it, except Miss Helen herself."

"Mr. Mac Tavish," pursued the somewhat offended Lily, "have you ever studed mythology? Do you remember the fate of Narcissus?"

Perceiving that one of those flowers was dancing near them, the polite Scotchman hesitated, almost willing to appear ignorant, sooner than wound the feelings of the unconscious wearer of the Narcissus.

"It was the fate of many, I believe."

"That is no answer."

"Well, he was in love."

"But with whom? I see you don't know," persisted the provoking little flirt.

"If you will promise not to frown, I will tell you, Mrs. Seyton, or rather proud Lily," he added, in a whisper. "Narcissus was affected in the very same manner that some pretty women are, when they look in a mirror; and if that mirror were a brook, I don't know of any thing that could save them!"

The lady had too much wit not to detect the lesson; but feeling that she had brought it upon herself, she turned off the conversation, much to the relief of the neighbouring Narcissus, who knew that if she was noticed by Mrs. Seyton, it was not for any charitable purpose.

Mrs. Grantly, greatly elated by the particular attentions of Lord Devere, and confident of the fortunate result of her favourite scheme, seemed much annoyed by the cold manner of her niece toward the nobleman. In the course of the evening she managed to whisper to the young girl—

"Now is the time, Elly; the prize is yours. Be but a little gracious, and Sir Archibald is at your feet."

Little did the fine lady know how different were the feelings of her niece from her own worldly desires. An indescribable sensation of despondency, of resignation, had crept into Helen's heart. She cared for no one, for nothing. There was no pride, no ambition in that bosom, so lately a prey to both. A calm, soft feeling of sadness was its only inmate.

It was quite late—almost two o'clock. The daughters of Flora had proved their humanity by duly appreciating

the many delicacies which were crowded upon a magnificent supper-table.

The black butterflies had offered the sparkling champagne to their smiling partners, and the German cotillion —a living garland of flowers—was at its height, when Mrs. Murray came up to Helen, who stood surrounded with admirers, watching the graceful figures of the favourite dance.

"If these gentlemen will spare you to me for a few minutes, Miss Leeson," she said, "I would like to show you a piece of statuary I received from Paris a few days ago."

Helen followed the hostess into the library.

In one corner of it stood a marble group, representing Hope, Faith, and Charity—the most exquisite personification of the three sisters. To render the effect more perfect, the artist had placed in the hand of the meek and loving Charity a shell, intended to contain the offering of those who could not resist that silent appeal to their nobler feelings.

And when Helen looked at it, the shell was already filled with gold-pieces, which, no doubt, had been deposited there through the beaming intercession of some bright eyes.

"Now look and admire, dear child, and then tell me whether Walter is not a man of taste and a devoted son, to think his adopted mother worthy of such a gift?"

Helen answered not, but contemplated in mute admiration the sublime work of art.

Mrs. Murray, satisfied with the effect produced by her favourite fancy, as she called it, left the room for a moment to give a few orders.

Mac Tavish, who was naturally curious and anxious to

share in the pleasure which Mrs. Murrry had promised her young guest, soon followed into the library.

Helen was still looking at the piece of statuary; and as she stood resting against the dark velvet curtain—so motionless, so beautiful—the young Scotchman gazed from the admirable marble group to the animated Pensée, and could scarcely discover which was the more perfect—nature's or art's creation.

"Ah, Mr. Mac Tavish! is that you?" exclaimed the young girl, as she started from her reverie. "Now that we are alone, will you not tell me that secret which puzzled me so much the other day?"

"I will; but you must promise not to be offended," he replied, in a gentle, almost affectionate tone, but so respectful, that it could not be mistaken for any thing but sincere interest.

"Tell me—do!" said Helen, with a slight nervousness of manner.

"Well!" added the young man, with hesitation, "I do not think to-night as I thought six weeks ago, when I said you had never been in love."

"I? Mr. Mac Tavish? You are joking, surely. Pray, what do you judge from?" asked Helen, with a faint smile.

"From a variety of circumstances; and I will say more—The happy mortal who has caused that matchless heart to flutter is not here to-night!"

At that moment Mrs. Murray came in, followed by Robert, who was in search of his sister.

"It is late, Elly, and mother is sitting up," he said; "come!"

"I am quite ready. Farewell, Mrs. Murray," she added. "Many thanks for this delightful evening!"

"I have not offended you, I hope?" whispered poor Eric, as he escorted Helen to her carriage.

"Oh, no," was the answer.

"Your father is better, my children," said Boget, as she met Robert and his sister at the door. "Go to bed quietly, and take some rest."

Helen went up to her room, undressed hastily, and lay down, but not to sleep. A thousand visions flitted across her bewildered mind. She recalled every sensation of the evening—her indifference to the young nobleman; her rivetted admiration of the marble group; every word uttered by Mac Tavish. At last, racked by the tumult of her thoughts, the young girl sat up, and clasping both hands upon her burning brow and then on her beating heart, she exclaimed—

"It cannot! it must not! it shall not be!" Then, with a wild look of terror, she cried, "Oh! it is; I feel it here —here, in this broken heart. Walter, thou art avenged at last—I love thee!" And burying her head in her pillow, she sobbed violently.

And the angel of love and peace watched over the sleeping girl, driving away the spirit of darkness and hatred who had dwelt there so long.

CHAPTER XX.

"A CHANGE came o'er the spirit of my dream." Let not those to whom the workings of the human heart are unknown, wonder and exclaim at the apparently sudden change in Helen's feelings toward her husband, so long an object of bitterness and aversion. It had been very gradual. Since the night of their meeting in Herman Smith's parlour, since the conviction of the immense debt of gratitude which her brother owed Walter had flashed upon her mind, Helen had somewhat relented. Her noble nature recoiled against denying the benefit received, even from one condemned by previous offence. And as the harsh feeling of hatred and contempt subsided, a meeker, more gentle spirit of pity and charity replaced it. Robert's account of Walter's devotion, and Mrs. Murray's affecting eulogium of his many virtues, had contributed greatly to produce that blessed result which Mac Tavish's penetration had detected, and which had burst upon the young girl's unconsciousness in so violent a manner.

Helen had never loved: her position in society, her great beauty, her acknowledged claims as the belle of belles, had surrounded her with so much adulation and homage, that there probably had been no room left in the young girl's heart for that all-engrossing sensation, which seeks but the society of the favoured one. Pride—whose influence had been so great over Helen's mind—had crushed every appeal of a softer nature. Thus it was that no precedent stood in

her memory, by which she could detect the true nature of her feelings toward Walter; and thus it was that the first dawn of that holy affection which chance and mystery had made *his*, filled the young heart with unknown and indescribable bliss. Woman's nature in its purity is so sublime, so beautiful!

It was a welcome morning, that upon which, after a calm sleep, Helen awoke to a new existence.

"Walter," she whispered, as her mind gradually collected the events, the impressions of the preceding night—"Walter, I love you. But how cruel I have been! Oh! how unmindful of the treasure Providence had bestowed upon me! So noble, so good, so miserable! If I could only kneel and claim that pardon I so long refused to grant! My only love born of my only hate! Well may I say it with the unfortunate Juliet—'God grant that I may atone for the suffering I have caused!'" she added, as she rose, and, for the first time, remembered her father's illness and danger.

Mr. Leeson had, in fact, been violently attacked by a disease which Dr. Clifford detected at once, and which, as the patient knew well, was an incurable one.

The spell had been short, but of a nature to alarm Mrs. Leeson considerably, and she endeavoured to obtain from the good doctor some knowledge of the evil which threatened her husband's life. But, as soon as the violence of the suffering had subsided, Mr. Leeson, restored to consciousness, had required of the physician that his family should be kept in total ignorance of the real state of his health; "For reasons," he added, "which were of great importance to him;" and, not being willing to assume any responsibility, Doctor Clifford had evaded all explanation on the subject.

After breakfast, Helen, with a lighter heart than she had felt for many days, sat some time with her father, entertaining him with a graphic description of Mrs. Murray's ball, and of the fanciful dresses worn by the flowers personified.

"It must have been a fine sight, indeed!" said the invalid, with an unusually kind smile. Acute suffering and a distant glimpse of eternity had softened the harsh spirit. "And did you dance with Sir Archibald, darling?"

"I did not dance at all: I was too uneasy about you, dear father, and it would not have been in keeping with my character—the flower of thought."

"True, very true," was the answer; "but I wish you would smile upon Sir Archibald, Helen."

"Father," said the young girl, in a solemn, earnest tone, "if I were to tell you that I love some one else, would you urge me to marry Lord Devere's nephew?"

"I would not; God forbid! There are sins enough to my account in heaven!" muttered the unhappy man.

"Then never mention that name to me, dearest," she said, fondly kissing her father; "for I do love, with all the powers of my soul, one who is worthy of my affection!"

"Tell me, who?" added the anxious man.

"Not now. One of these days I will!"

And as Mrs. Leeson and Anna then came in to keep the invalid's company, Helen went out to see Aunt Seraph and Laura, who was still confined to the house.

"How kind in you to come to us! Now tell me about the ball," said the young countess, offering her cousin a seat near her. "Did it equal your expectations?"

"It far exceeded them. I had no idea our ladies had so much taste, and fancied still less that the unworthy

daughters of humanity could personate so well the lovely children of the earth."

"I was so distressed at not seeing you, Elly, in your novel attire! When I am better, you must really favour me with a sight of your sweet self as you looked last evening. Now, aunt, that we have her here all to ourselves, shall we mention the subject you and I have been so intent upon for the last two weeks?"

"Of course; and I will not take a refusal, Helen. If your father is well, you must not say no."

"I never feel inclined to answer any of your suggestions with a negative, aunt; and unless this one is a very unexecutable one, I don't see why it should have that fate."

"Because there may be attractions here, which our seductions could not equal. In short, dear child, Laura and I are going to Europe on the first of May, and we insist upon having your precious company. All at my expense, of course."

A look of inexpressible joy beamed in Helen's eyes. Her first thought was *his!*

"If mother and father approve," she said, "nothing in this world could give me so much pleasure; and I am not too proud now, Aunt Seraph, to accept such a favour from you."

"I knew she would go!" exclaimed Laura, delighted. "Now we shall have to take that lazy Robert to escort us. He will not object to a trip, I am sure."

"It will benefit the poor boy," said Helen; "his conduct, of late, has caused us all great anxiety."

Miss Marsy left the room to attend to some domestic details.

"Will you really be pleased to go to Europe with us?"

asked the young countess, supposing that the dread of meeting Walter would prove an annoyance to her cousin.

"Of course," was the answer. Helen was tempted to avow the change which had so lately taken place in her feelings toward the young man, but shame and pride fettered the will, and she turned off the conversation, leaving Laura still under her first impression.

"Early as it may appear," continued the countess, "I have already received a visit from Mrs. Walker. The old lady was on one of her charitable missions, and came to claim a little donation I had promised her. She sat some time with me. I hesitated and reflected half an hour, and finally told her all about Alice's foolish affair with Allan Dorsay. She was much shocked, and at first was rather severe in her criminations; but hers is a mind too noble, too upright, not to acknowledge its errors. She said that she felt her brother and herself had been to blame, in depriving the young girl of the innocent amusements which her buoyant disposition requires, and that she would be more lenient in future. "You see," continued Laura, smiling, "I have considerably improved our little Friend's prospects."

"Now, let us talk of ourselves, Elly. We have but three weeks to spare. The first of May will be here before we are aware of it, and a great deal must be done in that short space of time. I have several persons to see—various arrangements to make; for the Lord only knows whether I shall ever return to America."

"Laura, Laura, don't talk thus!" exclaimed Helen. "Why should you not come home with us?"

"Why, dearest?" said the young countess with a celestial smile. "Because God calls me to a brighter home. Weep not. Mine is a happy lot. I tasted of the unalloyed

bliss which Providence sometimes grants the exiled mortal; and had it remained within my grasp, no voice from heaven could have weaned me from this land of passage. But the bright light which illuminated my path was withdrawn, and total darkness succeeded. Words cannot express the anguish, the agony of that fatal hour. But it was salutary. It awoke me to a true sense of our destiny as Christians, as followers of the suffering Saviour. I felt that happiness *too perfect* could not prepare us for the enjoyment of the reward in store for us, and I blessed the blow which had crushed my mortal treasures, that I might seek the joys of eternity. Two links alone still bind me here below—poor Aunt Seraph, too old to spare me, and my precious child, too young to be deprived of my maternal care," added the young widow, as the tears glistened in her eyes. "For you, my sister, Providence has reserved many blessings, I trust; and to you, Helen, I bequeath the care of the dear ones whom I shall leave thus alone. But," continued Laura, "I am anticipating the worst. Perhaps many months may still be mine. Dry up your tears, darling. Do not let aunt see that we have spoken of the evil she dares not acknowledge to herself."

After spending an hour at Miss Marsy's, Helen returned to her home with a heavy heart. The joy of the morning had been blighted by the conversation with Laura, to whom she was sincerely attached. But how powerful are the benignant efforts of Hope at that early period of life! "She may be mistaken," thought the young girl. "This trip to Europe will restore her health. At Laura's age there are so many chances of a change for the better;" and partially reassured about her cousin, Helen gave herself up entirely to the dream of love which had just dawned upon her.

"Is not this aunt's day for the matinée dansante?" asked Anna Leeson, as she entered her sister's room, the next morning.

"Yes, unfortunately! I am heartily tired of all this dissipation."

"You will enjoy a complete rest while you are abroad, sister. How we shall miss you! Papa was reluctant to allow you to go, but he finally gave up to our arguments. You will have a delightful time, I dare say."

"That depends considerably upon circumstances," said Helen. "I scarcely think that I shall be satisfied, away from you all."

"Oh! with Robert and Laura you will. Now, don't let me interrupt you; I came in to help you dress."

"Anna," said Helen, after reflecting a moment, "how is Jane Kelly?"

"Very low, indeed. Dr. Clifford don't think she can live long."

"Poor thing! I would really like to see her again; she is so resigned, such a patient sufferer."

"Yes; a true Christian. I promised to see her this morning, and if you choose, I will tell her you intend going there to-morrow."

"Yes, I will do so. Now, Puss, ring for Sophie. I must get ready for that stupid reception."

CHAPTER XXI.

AGAIN the votaries of fashion met at Mrs. Grantly's princely mansion.

In the spring, when the gay are wearied with the exhausting dissipation which has incurred loss of rest, frequently of health, and so much wear and tear of mind and body, some new mode of amusement (of spending that valuable time which is gold to the active ones of this world, and which hangs like lead upon the unemployed) must be devised. To this emergency the fluttering beaux and belles owe the introduction of those matinées which, of late, have become so fashionable, and which, added to many other charms, possess that of affording our ladies an opportunity for the display of their elegant spring toilets.

Mrs. Grantly, unconscious of the mysterious workings of Helen's strange fate, and confident in the success of her long-woven web, had anxiously anticipated this morning reception, which would, she thought, most certainly bring forth the realization of all her hopes. Thus it was that with unusual grace and high spirits the lady received her guests, giving her welcome to Lord Devere and his nephew that peculiar tinge of affability which implies a strong inclination for a closer intimacy. His lordship understood and appreciated the favour; but Sir Archibald, somewhat discouraged by Helen's coolness of manner, cast a timid glance at a bevy of fair competitors in search of the prize he was so anxious to win.

It was some time before the young man could discover

Helen's retreat. She had joined Mrs. Murray in the boudoir, and with an eager ear listened to her account of Walter's travels, and to the heartfelt praise which the kind friend bestowed upon him.

"Yes," continued the old lady, "*he* is the one to insure a woman's happiness—to make her heart beat with pride. If I could only see him marry one that would resemble you, Helen! Would that you could become my own or my adopted daughter!" added Mrs. Murray, as she gazed upon the lovely countenance so full of hope and trust.

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Sir Archibald and several other persons.

The young nobleman advanced toward Helen, saying—"You will not refuse to dance to-day, Miss Leeson, I hope."

Having no excuse to give, Helen assented, and the remainder of the morning was spent in the dancing-room, much to her annoyance; for she took no interest in the gayety around her, and longed for the time when she could indulge in the sweet reverie of her new-born happiness.

Toward five o'clock, chance—or rather some cunning manœuvre of Mrs. Grantly's—brought Helen and Sir Archibald, her partner, for the second time into the boudoir, and suddenly they were left alone.

"Miss Leeson," said the young man hurriedly, "hear me one moment. In vain have I sought an opportunity of expressing my sentiments to you. Oh! stay, and answer but this one question. Can you, will you be mine?"

"Sir Archibald," answered the young girl, nervous and annoyed, "I was in hopes that my manner toward you would have saved us both this awkward meeting. I feel honoured by your choice, but cannot dispose of a heart which is not my own. Forget that you ever loved me, and

grant me a friendship which I shall always value very highly!"

The young man knelt and pressed Helen's hand to his lips. "Oh! I am miserable, unfortunate!" he added; "you were my only love!"

"A téte-à-téte!" said Mrs. Seyton, as she came in, leaning on Marvell's arm. "I hope I have not intruded," added the little widow, with a meaning smile.

"Not at all," replied Helen, recovering her presence of mind; "Sir Archibald was describing a presentation to the queen."

"Of hearts?"

"No; of Great Britain, or of the kingdom of Flora."

"Very graphic, I dare say. Before I forget it, Sir Archibald, let me request you to keep yourself disengaged for next Thursday. I expect a few friends at my country residence on Staten Island. You will meet this fair lady. Helen I depend upon you. It will be your farewell appearance as the belle of the season."

"I shall grieve to part with my friends, but the loss of that title will not cost me much regret, as I was not aware of having borne or deserved it."

"Modesty lends a great charm to intrinsic merit," said Marvell. "We will miss you terribly, Miss Helen; but your thoughts will be so much engrossed by the wonders of the Old World, that you will scarcely think of the sighing admirers at home."

During this conversation, Sir Archibald had somewhat recovered from his disappointment; and anxious to be diverted from the painful impressions produced by Helen's rejection of his offer, he gladly submitted to the seductions of Julia Elvington and Cora Dalton, whom he met in the conservatory.

A lowering cloud on Mrs. Grantly's countenance, as she approached her niece, announced to her that the little occurrences of the boudoir were not unknown to her. The young girl's avowal of another affection had struck dismay into the heart of the crest-fallen aunt. But Mrs. Grantly was too selfish to feel much concerned about an interest not materially affecting her welfare; and as that was restricted to her own person, few were the opportunities upon which the tender feelings of the heartless woman were brought into requisition.

"What care I, after all?" she said. "Let them manage it themselves. But," she added, with a sigh, "it would have sounded so very harmoniously! My niece, Lady Courtnay!"

Faithful to the promise she had sent Jane Kelly, Helen went to see her on the following day.

With a beating heart, the young girl entered the lodgings where, six months before, she had heard *that* conversation between the afflicted woman and the child of her love and devotion. And now she found poor Jane stretched out on her bed of suffering, meek and resigned, awaiting the call which would sever the fetters that bound her to a life of bitter trial.

"How kind in you, dear young lady," she said, "to think of a poor creature like me! Miss Anna, who never goes into society, and lives in deeds of charity, can give her time to others. But you, miss—so courted, so admired, the belle, as your sweet sister calls you—have no moments to spare, and I am doubly thankful for your visit, now that my boy is gone, I am so much alone!" Fatigued by this long speech, the poor creature closed her eyes and seemed quite exhausted.

"Jane," said Helen, as she sat near the bed of sickness,

"is there nothing I could do for you? Nothing that could comfort you in this sad hour?"

"Alas! no, dear lady," murmured the old woman, apparently sinking fast.

Alarmed, Helen rose and called the girl, but she had gone out on some errand. She returned to the patient, and repeated gently—

"Jane! speak to me. I need not remind you of the joys of heaven, which shall be yours very soon; Anna must have described them to you in her own eloquent language."

"Oh, yes!" muttered the sick woman; "I know all that, but my heart aches at the idea of my boy's trouble. His last farewell was so sad! Oh, if I knew he was happy, I should die in peace." And large, pearly drops clouded the almost vacant glance.

A blessed thought of comfort shot across Helen's mind. She leaned over the dying woman, and said—"Jane, Walter is happy; he loves me; I am his wife; and in a few months, with God's mercy, we will be united."

An expression of doubt appeared on the pale countenance, but there was truth in the tremulous voice of the young girl, and a ray of joy brightened the emaciated face—

"Happy! my boy! O Lord, I thank thee!" and the spirit fled to heaven, bearing the joyful tidings to the angels above.

Helen gazed on the lifeless features for a few moments, and the tears fell fast upon the cold hand which had clasped hers in the last struggle. She knelt and prayed fervently that peace might be granted to the departed one, whose submission and patience had deserved the holy reward. Nor was Walter forgotten in that solemn moment; there, in the presence of death, the weeping girl took the sacred

engagement of devoting herself to the happiness of the beloved one, whose life had been so filled with sorrow caused by the guilt of her own father. "Grant, O Lord," she muttered, "that this generation may atone for the sins of the last!"

When Helen went home, she sent Mrs. Boget to make all the arrangements for Jane's funeral. She felt in duty bound to acquit Walter's debt of gratitude toward the friend of his childhood.

A few days after, both sisters repaired to the lodgings of the poor woman to dispose of her earthly goods. As she had no heirs, her furniture and clothes were given to several of her neighbours as destitute as she had been herself. Among some papers which Helen was examining, while Anna had gone, with the little servant, to deliver a bundle of clothes, she found a small parcel, around which a ribbon was tied with great care. It was addressed to "Mrs. Jane Kelly, from W. G."

With a trembling hand, the young girl opened the package. It contained a daguerreotype of Walter, and a note, in which he had enclosed a lock of his hair.

"According to your request, my dear Jane," wrote Walter, "I send you myself, and one of the locks you so enjoyed curling in old times. Farewell, dear friend; think of me, and pray for your boy. WALTER."

"This is mine—my own!" exclaimed Helen, as she pressed the likeness to her lips; and, concealing the valuable links which seemed to bind her still more closely to her husband, she continued her charitable task. No amount of wealth could have purchased the treasures which Providence had granted to her in so unforeseen a manner, and which were cherished so fondly, so ardently, by her loving heart.

CHAPTER XXII.

It was not without considerable reluctance that Mr. Leeson had given his consent to Helen's trip to Europe. Knowing that he had not many months to live, the wretched father was loath to part with the sunbeam of his waning journey. Since the violent attack which had so alarmed his family, a great change had come over the guilty man. The racking passions which had so long mastered his feelings had given place to an all-absorbing despair at the thought of leaving his children an appalling inheritance of ruin and disgrace. There was no pride now, in that agonized being. Grief, in its dismal, comfortless horrors, visited the sleepless pillow; and night after night the patient, devoted wife watched the tortures of that soul which heaven seemed to have abandoned to the powers of darkness. But the time was not far distant when *her* claim upon the ever-just Providence would be acknowledged, and through its mediation peace was to be purchased for the erring sinner.

As Mr. Leeson was not confined to the house, the world knew nothing of the sufferings which had become a portion of his life; and Helen could not refuse several farewell invitations which were forced upon her by sincere or seeming friends. Mrs. Murray gave her a beautiful dinner, which would have afforded the young girl great pleasure, had not her mind been distracted by the trials of the dear ones at home. Again the old lady spoke of Walter—of her affection for him; and each day strengthened the love which

had struggled so for admittance into Helen's heart, and which was now all-powerful. She loved him for all the hatred she had borne him—for all the agony he had endured from it. But where was he? Would they ever meet? Might not some unforeseen accident blight her budding happiness? Many a lonely hour was spent in these meditations, and a cloud still hung over the bright dawn of hope.

Mrs. Seyton's fête-champêtre was creating quite a sensation in the fashionable world. Her wealth and acknowledged good taste afforded matter for brilliant anticipations; and the competitors for Sir Archibald's favour, who had noticed the evident breach between himself and Helen, were active in devising the means of captivating the young nobleman. Cora Dalton, confident of success, had given a splendid fête at her uncle's princely residence, and the young man had openly expressed his admiration of the hostess and her elegant entertainment; but as yet he seemed undecided, and spoke of returning to England on the first of May. This arrangement suited neither the sanguine Cora, nor the more profound manœuverer, Mrs. Seyton, who, in a very sly manner, was gradually winning the devotion of the old lord, for the express purpose of possessing the only missing jewel to her gilded coronet—the title of Lady Devere.

"How good and thoughtful in you, Elly, to have suggested our spending this morning at Allbreeze!" said Anna to her sister, as both were putting on their bonnets.

"Here I am!" exclaimed Alice Irving, as she entered. "Quite ready, girls? Anna, you and I are to accompany Laura and Miss Marsy, are we not?"

"Yes; and Mrs. Murray will call for Helen. She has promised to spend an hour with us, and then they will both go to Mrs. Seyton's. A very nice arrangement, but I can-

not bear to leave mamma alone: we could not induce her to go with us."

"Mother is coming in to sit with Mrs. Leeson," said Alice. "I told her she had refused to be one of our party. What a delightful time we shall have!" continued the happy girl, as she went down stairs, followed by the tottering Anna.

Mrs. Murray called for Helen a few minutes afterward.

"What a comfort it is for me to have you all to myself for an hour! and how I shall enjoy seeing your country residence, of which I have heard so much!" said the old lady.

"If I were not going off this spring, I should have claimed you for a few days, dear madam. Your society always affords me so much pleasure—so much to learn and to appreciate!"

"You flatter me, Helen; and true friendship admits not of that gilded praise."

"Say not so; and, do believe me, my happiest hours within the last few weeks have been spent in your society."

"Well, if I judge you by myself, I shall think you are indeed sincere; and the thought of parting with you is painful, indeed; particularly as you might meet with some European charmer, who would detach you from your American home."

"Don't fear that," said Helen, smiling; "there are links in my heart which bind me too closely to my native land."

"Links!" exclaimed Mrs. Murray.

"Ask me not more now. I will confide my little weaknesses to you in the fall, when I return laden with brilliant souvenirs of the wonders of past ages."

"You intend remaining some time in Paris, do you not?"

continued the kind friend. "I must give you a letter for a charming person, Madame de Mornay, who will, I know, be an agreeable acquisition. She is a Creole lady, who has resided many years in France. I have but one dread in giving you an introduction to her. It is on account of her son Gustave—as fine and noble a fellow as I ever met anywhere, and who, as I mentioned just now, will try his best to captivate my Heartsease."

"He cannot do it, dear Mrs. Murray. That power no man possesses, I assure you."

"Well, well, I hope not; but I think Gustave a very dangerous man; so intellectual, so refined, such a perfect gentleman!"

"There are such in our country," said Helen.

"Not many anywhere," replied the old lady: "I have known very few. Now, will you answer me one question, perhaps an indiscreet one? Do you think Sir Archibald Courtnay will marry in this country.?"

"I cannot tell; but," added Helen, smiling at the undisguised anxiety of her friend, "one thing is very certain —he will never marry your Heartsease."

"That is all I want to know!" exclaimed Mrs. Murray. "Now I leave you to your meditations—which, I know, must be pleasanter than the chatting of an old woman—until we reach Staten Island."

Helen attempted to remonstrate, but in vain; and when the carriage stopped at the gate of the family residence, our heroine was absorbed in the construction of one of those brilliant edifices of fancy which youth can erect at the shortest notice, and a single breath of materialism will demolish in an instant.

The weather was very fine. One of our glittering spring days had greeted the fête-champêtre to which all looked

forward with so much pleasure. The budding beauties of nature seemed arrayed in their brightest colours to welcome their fair rivals—many quite as frail, alas!

So thought the young countess, as she walked around the old place with her friends, bidding a last farewell to the haunts of her childhood, and now and then turning to Robert, on whose arm she was leaning, to point out some favourite spot—some silent witness of their former sports.

"How beautiful the earth is!" whispered the young widow; "but far more perfect must paradise be!"

"Speak not of heaven, Laura," answered the young man, with a slight irritation of manner; "one would fancy your thoughts were ever beyond that cloudless sky which hangs so heavily upon me!"

"Robert, you are unjust, ungrateful, and sometimes cruel!" she added.

"Can I help being so, when my life has been so sad, so miserable, so deathlike? For without affection, what is it but a bitter journey of toil?" he said.

"Our own errors and wickedness may make it so, but Providence has pointed out a far different object to those who seek its holy inspirations," continued the young countess.

"That is all very fine; and when you tell me these things, Laura, I cannot help believing them. But can you not love me as I love you, cousin?" whispered the passionate young man, as he lingered behind the merry girls.

"I love you with all the devotion of a sister, Robert; more than that I cannot give. Oh! here are Mrs. Murray and Helen," she added, leaving her cousin to meet the two ladies.

"All a farce!" muttered the young man, as he turned away, and went in pursuit of Alice and Anna.

"What a lovely spot this is!" exclaimed Mrs. Murray; "I don't wonder you are all so much attached to it."

Allbreeze was in fact one of the finest places on the island. It commanded an extensive view of the ocean, and from the back part of the house could be distinguished distant vistas of woods and valleys, unfolding boundless beauties of landscape.

The family mansion had been built some twenty-five years; fortunately, before all the distorted architectural fancies, which have rendered so many homes comfortless, had become fashionable. It was a square building, surrounded on all sides by a spacious piazza. Its interior distribution had been calculated for the comfort of all, Mrs. Leeson and Aunt Seraph having suggested the plan; and in their charitable sensitiveness, they had considered not only the gratification of every fastidious fancy, but also the actual wants of the most unpretending members of the family. Thus, even the servants had been provided with spacious and salubrious rooms—a luxury which, we are sorry to say, is not always afforded them in the residences of the wealthy. How often do we sacrifice to the mere symmetry of a glance the essential comforts of our fellow-beings!

It was not surprising, therefore, that all should speak of the old place with such rapturous eulogium; neither did Mrs. Murray deem that praise exaggerated when she took a seat on the piazza with Helen and Laura, and gazed at the living panorama which unfurled its inimitable beauties before her. At that moment Robert came in with the two young girls, loaded with flowers, which were soon strewed about them, previous to being tied into bouquets. Aunt Seraph and Boget were superintending the lunch, which all would be sure to appreciate.

"I cannot tell you, Miss Marsy, how much I have en-

joyed this morning," said Mrs. Murray, as they walked through the grounds, after partaking of a delicious collation. "Now, if we could return to New York without being obliged to be present at Mrs. Seyton's fête, it would be truly satisfactory."

"I have no doubt you will be amply repaid for the exertion," replied Aunt Seraph; "Mrs. Seyton's place is remarkably beautiful—much finer than ours."

"But not to be compared to it in many respects. Here you have comfort and elegance, and I doubt very much whether both can be found at Highmount. But, to change the subject, which is not particularly interesting—do tell me how long you intend remaining in Europe?"

"It will depend entirely on my Laura's health. If she is better, we may spend the winter in Italy. The dear child has a great wish to visit Naples. Count Marini's family—or rather an old aunt and uncle of his, the Marquis and Marchioness di Caristi—are still living, and have expressed as trong desire to see little Arthur. My niece feels in duty bound to gratify them; and the poor child has a pious longing to visit the spot where her husband's remains lie—at the Campo Santo Cemetery near Naples. It was a terrible trial for her to part with those precious relics; but, when the late countess died, she made her son promise that, whatever his fate might be, his remains should be sent to Naples; and to this request his wife adhered with scrupulous delicacy."

"All this is very sad," said Mrs. Murray. "Yours has been like mine—a life of bitter trials. But is it not better that it should be so?" she added, pressing Miss Marsy's hand.

"Perhaps it is. We can reason thus when all is over—when the grave has clasped the loved ones; but when, step

by step, we see them glide from us, until their very life becomes a dim shadow, oh! then the agony is unbearable!" said Aunt Seraph, with a sigh.

"It is, indeed. But strength is granted in those hours of mental torture to the patient sufferer," replied Mrs. Murray. "God will, I trust, restore your darling's health: this trip may be of the greatest benefit. Two o'clock already!" she continued, looking at her watch; "I suppose Helen must be quite ready by this time. I am really sorry to leave you."

In order to enjoy her morning, Helen had gone down to the island in a simple dress, and Sophie had been despatched with her toilet, at which she was engaged while the two friends were taking their sad walk.

A white muslin dress, perfectly fresh-trimmed with several flounces, and a head-dress of natural flowers tastefully arranged by the little maid, had been selected by the young girl's instinctive sense of the beautiful; and nothing could be more genteel and appropriate.

So thought Mrs. Murray and Aunt Seraph, as they met her in the hall.

"Now wrap up well, dear child," said the former; "we must go. Farewell, friends! farewell, all! Now that I have tasted the sweets of your society, I shall be still more reluctant to part with you. Mr. Leeson, I have a seat to offer you in my carriage." And the kind old lady drove off, having produced upon all that impression of regard and admiration which is the first dawn of friendship.

When our party reached Highmount, most of the guests had arrived there—many in silks and satins, loaded down with elegant head-dresses and elaborate trimmings. Few had been wise enough to meet the dangerous rivalry of nature's charms in the modest attire which, of all others,

displays real beauty. Even their late trial of the flowers personified had not taught them the lesson of simple and refined taste.

Helen was welcomed, as usual, by a crowd of admirers, who were faithful in their devotion to the belle of the season. Her title had remained unimpaired during the whole winter; and now that the lovely sovereign of so fragile a realm was about to abdicate, all were anxious to honour by due homage her last appearance among her devoted subjects.

"Have you heard of the surprise we are to have to-day, Miss Helen?" asked Marvell, as, with his usual luck, he managed to carry off the young girl in the first waltz.

"No; but before we dance any more, let me take a glimpse of this splendid residence. Will you be my guide, Mr. Marvell?"

"With infinite satisfaction." And the beau led his partner through the various apartments, all decorated with flowers, and furnished with as much magnificence as the extravagant mansion occupied by the hostess in New York. There, upon that elevated spot, where nature in its majestic grandeur seemed to defy the waves of the ocean and the blasts of the tempest, such a display of luxury seemed little in keeping. It was too effeminate for the violent contact of the elements—too gaudy for the noble and gigantic scenery around it.

In short, had Mrs. Seyton been a poet, she could not have breathed amid the satins and gildings of Highmount.

"And what is this secret which seems to interest you so much?" asked Helen.

"Nothing that *you* will like," was the answer; "but pleasure enough to satisfy twelve of our ladies and as many of our boys:—I can't call Sydney Morris, Dorsay,

Dallas, Corry, and so many others, men. Well, we are to have a quadrille danced by these individuals, disguised as peasants. A very novel idea, as you perceive, and which originated with the hostess."

As Marvell was finishing his phrase, Mr. Dobbins, with a look of deep concern, came up to him.

"Have you seen my wife, Mr. Marvell? Ah! Miss Leeson, good-morning. Did you meet Olivia? I cannot find her."

"Mrs. Dobbins is in the dressing-room, putting on her costume."

"Her what?" asked the astonished husband.

"Don't you know," continued the unmerciful Harry, "that Mrs. Dobbins is to be one of the dancers in the quadrille which Mrs. Seyton has prepared for this fête-champêtre?"

"Not a word of it, my dear fellow. She never tells me any thing." And the disconsolate man walked off, comforting himself, as he passed by a mirror, with a glimpse at his diamond breastpin, which had cost a mint of money.

"Just as I prophesied," said Mac Tavish, who had overheard poor Dobbins' complaints against his better half.

A message from Mrs. Seyton to Marvell, requiring his presence immediately, left Mac Tavish the inestimable privilege of offering his arm to Helen.

Since the eventful disclosure he had made at the flower ball, Eric had not spoken to her; and, fearing he had given offence, he offered her his protection in a timid, diffident manner, very unusual to him.

"I am most happy, Miss Leeson, to have an opportunity of apologizing for my presumptuous speech to you, at Mrs. Murray's," he said. "Have you forgiven me?"

"Certainly," she answered, smiling; "it was only a joke."

"It was not a joke, though; one of these days you will acknowledge it yourself. But let me, while I have the pleasure of your society, mention a subject which, I trust, will meet with your approbation, and which is of some interest to me. You are going to travel through Scotland, are you not?"

"I hope so."

"My mother and sister live in Edinburgh. It would, I know, afford them infinite satisfaction to become acquainted with some of my American friends to whom I am so much indebted: would you allow me to give you a letter for them? In a foreign country it is sometimes useful to have acquaintances, and I think you will like Rose; she is almost as sweet as her namesake, the child of Scott's fancy."

"I have no doubt," replied Helen, "it would give me great pleasure to know your mother and sister. Pray, do not forget that letter. Mr. Marvell," she added, as Harry came toward them, almost convulsed with laughter, "do let us share your merriment."

"The very best, choicest fun I have had for a long time!" he said. "But let me show you this fine prospect, Miss Leeson," added Marvell, as he led Mac Tavish and his companion some distance from the dancing couples. "You cannot imagine any thing so farcical," he continued. "Since Lord Devere's arrival here, every one has been under the impression that he was a widower; in fact, I never heard him mention his wife, except as 'the late Lady Devere;' consequently, a friend of ours, who is fond of euphonious titles, has been most anxious to appropriate that one; and to her ardent desire we are partially indebted

for this matinée. Well, a few days ago, I received a letter from Frank Lawrence, who is travelling in England, in which he mentions having danced with an exquisite beauty, about twenty-five, a Lady Devere, separated from her husband; a great flirt, it appears, who must have led the poor old gentleman a sorry life. Just now, Mrs. Seyton sent for me, in her boudoir, to make some little arrangements for the quadrille, and, perchance, I mentioned Lawrence's piece of intelligence. Words cannot express the look of consternation which appeared on the lady's countenance—evidently bitter disappointment. Of course, I saw nothing, and made my exit; but is it not a capital story?"

"How uncharitable in you to repeat it, Mr. Marvell!" said Helen, with a slight shade of reproach.

"Does Mrs. Seyton spare any one, Miss Helen?"

"That is a poor, unchristianlike argument, not worthy of your heart and good sense."

"If you were always about, dear lady," answered the young man, smiling, "we would be better, no doubt."

"Make room for the quadrille!" was the general exclamation, as the folding-doors opened to admit the dancers in their fanciful costumes.

It was a pretty sight, and produced a great sensation among the votaries of fashion, as few only had been initiated. Cora Dalton, who was a very graceful dancer, bore the palm. Julia Elvington, the Warrens, Mrs. Dobbins, (who eyed her astonished spouse with all possible trust in her own privileges as an independent person,) and even Augusta Waring—whom Mrs. Seyton had consented to invite in consideration of her undisputed claim to exquisite dancing—appeared to advantage. The gentlemen were gawky and awkward, of course; but, being indispensable shades to the tableau, were tolerated by the admiring

spectators; their youth was a sufficient excuse for their somewhat ridiculous appearance. Mrs. Seyton was prodigal of her exclamations of admiration: she seemed in high spirits; but to those who, like Marvell, knew the inward workings of the little widow's web of ambition, there was a nervous excitement about her manner which bespoke sad disappointment.

Let us not tarry longer on the description of the many attractions offered by the queen of Highmount to her numerous guests. At five o'clock a splendid collation was served, and at seven the halls of the princely residence still rung with the sounds of festive mirth.

Cora Dalton, elated by her success, and confident of having partially captivated the young Englishman, insisted upon his accepting a seat in her uncle's carriage, while Mrs. Grantly, who had appeared at the fête in her usual character as a prominent leader of ton, offered Lord Devere the same accommodation in her own elegant equipage.

Well might it have been said of these ladies of fashion, what a jester once remarked—"An infusion of nobility and rank will make humanity digest many a bitter pill."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE time for Helen's departure was drawing near; and as the hour of separation from the dear ones approached, the young girl felt nervous, and almost reluctant to accept Aunt Seraph's kind offer. Even the hope of meeting Walter grew more dim, and the two last days were painful indeed. Robert was the only one of the party perfectly satisfied and unconcerned. He did feel some slight uneasiness about his father, and a trifling scruple in receiving so expensive a favour as a trip of six months to Europe from his aunt. But, with a better nature, Robert possessed Mrs. Grantly's selfishness. Might we not extend the remark to his sex in general? adding, however, in immediate extenuation, that fate and education are responsible for their want of that delicate, self-sacrificing feature which actuates every fibre in a woman's heart. Perhaps it is best that it should be so. In this particular case it was a fortunate thing, as the party greatly needed Robert's good spirits and protecting energy.

"Have you every thing ready, my child?" inquired Mrs. Leeson on the morning preceding her daughter's departure. "Can I do any thing for you?"

"Nothing, mother," replied the young girl, as she sat down near the dear parent whose influence over her whole existence had been one smile of love.

"You must write very often, remember—by every steamer," continued Mrs. Leeson. "How we shall miss you, my child! If it were not for your aunt and our poor

Laura, I never would have consented to your leaving us—never!"

"I should not have gone under any other circumstances," said Helen.

"Have you sent for your dressing-case, Miss Elly?" asked Mrs. Boget, whose affectionate zeal had taken a fresh start on this occasion. "Here is your travelling cloak, and Sophie is finishing the hood."

"Every thing seems to be prepared except myself, dear Boget. I am so unwilling to leave you all, and this precious home," added the young girl, as she glanced at the familiar objects around her; "and I shall not hear this tinkler any more," she added, as she rose to answer Alice Irving's call.

"Am I wanted, neighbour?" asked the little Quakeress.

"Yes, for the whole day. I must see as much of you as I can; your bright spirits will cheer me."

"Very well, I am coming," was the answer; and a few minutes after, the sweet girl was sitting with her friend, making a thousand agreeable reflections upon the delightful time the travellers would have. In short, she painted such a glowing picture of the future to Helen and Anna, that both sisters became quite cheerful. So true it is that joy and grief are contagious. Would that sin and bad example were not!

The day passed swiftly. After dinner, before several expected friends came in, Helen went up to see her father, who seemed more fatigued and exhausted than usual.

The solitary man sat in an arm-chair in the library, apparently absorbed in thought. Helen entered gently, and stood by him, before he was aware of her presence.

"Ah! is that you, darling?" he said.

"Yes; I thought you might be alone, and would enjoy

a quiet little chat with your daughter, who is going to leave you so soon."

"Too soon, my dear child!" said Mr. Leeson, as he pressed the hand he held in his to his lips. "Too soon! Who knows whether I shall ever gaze upon your loved countenance again?"

"You will, of course," answered the young girl, much affected by the deep emotion which his voice betrayed.

"We cannot be certain of that," he continued; "and perhaps the day will come when the memory of your father will be a bitter theme to you, Helen!"

"Never!" she exclaimed; "never, father! Happen what may, I shall always think of you with love and respect!"

"God grant it may be so!" he muttered. "Still, this awful result would be but the just retribution for my many sins. Helen," he added, apparently much agitated, "to you I would confide a terrific secret which has racked this torn bosom for many a long year, and will embitter my existence to my last hour! I cannot tell you all; but I have wronged, in the most cruel, disgraceful manner, one to whom I owed a debt of gratitude! Don't start, child! Others have done it, and will do it yet! While I was happy and prosperous, I felt not the sting of conscience; its cry was hushed by the din of success and pride! But since trouble and sickness have crushed my spirit, its incessant appeal has almost maddened me. Would that I could find a spot where the horrid vision could not reach me!"

"Father, have you never sought comfort in prayer? God is merciful to the repentant sinner!" said the trembling girl.

"Yes, I know it; but I cannot pray. The lips which

have not been schooled to that holy communion refuse to convey the expression of the aching soul!"

"Oh, think not thus!" she replied. "The prayer which the heart conceives needs no utterance. There will be pardon and comfort granted to you most certainly, if you but claim them from the merciful Judge!"

"Helen," continued the wretched father, "you little know the bleeding effort it has cost me to avow my sin to you, my child, in whose eyes I now stand as a guilty man! but my errors needed an expiation, and it may one day lie in your power to atone, in a measure, for the injury I have done that man."

"What do you mean, father?"

"Oh, merely, should you ever meet a man by the name of Grey—Walter Grey—tell him I sincerely repented, and trust he has forgiven me! But," added Mr. Leeson, as he convulsively grasped his daughter's arm, "let no other human ear gather those words from your lips. Swear that you will do so!"

"I will," said the young girl, as the varied emotions of her heart brought sweet and bitter tears to her eyes.

"Now go down stairs," added Mr. Leeson; "and remember, that if I should be taken from you, your mother's small fortune has been secured. You will not live as we do now, but you will not want. Go, darling, go;" and with mingled affection and irritation, he gently motioned his daughter from him.

Helen left the library, and went up to her room, to recover a little from the violence of her agitation before meeting her friends in the drawing-room. Sad as had been the impression produced upon her pure, upright mind by the awful communication she had received, she could not refrain from a delightful sensation of joy at the

thought of meeting her husband freed from the painful enmity which her father had entertained against the young man.

She was in duty bound to love him; and, by devoting herself to his happiness, she would but grant him the sacred compensation which was his due. So pure, so true was her affection; and so strange, will many think, that she should feel thus toward one almost a stranger to her! There is a mysterious link between the spirits of this world which needs not presence to rivet two hearts!

Helen found the parlour filled with company, all kind and affectionate in their farewells. Many little tokens of friendship had been sent in the morning, for which sincere thanks were returned, and promises of regular correspondence given. But such meetings are always sad, notwithstanding the attempts of some indifferent ones to make them otherwise, and at an early hour most of the visitors retired.

"Emma, dear," said Helen, as she kissed her friend, "I cannot bear to part with you."

"Don't speak of it," replied the sweet girl, wiping away her tears. "I have been miserable all day; I wish you were gone now, since it must be."

"Let me take you home, Miss Emma," said Herman Smith.

"Yes, I trust her and all to you, Herman," said Helen. "If this good friend had not been here," she added, pressing the young man's hand, "I never should have gone to Europe."

"Be perfectly easy, dear lady," replied Herman; "I shall, I hope, prove worthy of your trust."

After bidding all farewell, Helen retired to her room; but before undressing she read a few chapters in the Bible.

While she was thus occupied, Boget came in with a note, which she gave her young mistress; and, having inquired whether she had every thing ready, the worthy woman retired.

Helen opened the note: it was from Laura, and contained a small strip of newspaper. It ran thus:

"DEAREST:

"As you might possibly see this piece of intelligence elsewhere, and express some disagreeable surprise, I here enclose it; hoping, now, that nothing will mar the pleasure which I know your trip to Europe will afford you.

"Yours, LAURA."

With an indescribable feeling of terror and apprehension, Helen opened the little paper, and read these few words:

"Died, at Rome, of an accident, Walter Grey, of this city."

"Oh, Lord!" exclaimed the agonized girl; "dead! and without one word of pardon for my cruelty!" Then, throwing herself on her knees, with clasped hands she added: "Alas! I have deserved this blow. Walter! Walter! would that I could die too! life is so full of bitterness!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

PAINFUL, indeed, were Helen's thoughts when, on the following morning, she awoke to the consciousness of the sad change which that dreadful intelligence had wrought in her existence. The dream which had spread its brilliant rays over her whole being had vanished, and nothing remained but sorrow and darkness; and the conviction that the injury she had done Walter had been unatoned for, filled the young girl's mind with regret more bitter, perhaps, than the deprivation of that link of love and hope which had entwined itself around her heart.

"Would that I could give up this trip, and remain at home! What object have I now to compensate for the sacrifice?" muttered the wretched girl, as she slowly proceeded with her toilet. "Selfish! oh! thrice selfish!" she added; "do I not owe myself to poor Laura, my more than sister? And if I fulfil my duty here below, will not God grant me that mercy which he permitted not that I should receive from the lips of the loved one?"

Comforted by this soothing thought of charity and devotion, Helen continued her preparations.

All or most of our readers have witnessed, or perhaps taken an active interest in, the painful scenes which attend a parting of relatives and friends. The last words and embrace, cherished so fondly in Memory's stores; the thousand unutterable blessings which a sympathetic tear conveys to the traveller; and, after the parting has taken place, the lingering look of love which follows the retreat-

ing carriage, and the burst of uncontrollable despair which for a moment crushes all hope.

Thus it was in Helen's family. Robert and Herman accompanied the weeping girl, who turned again and again to catch a glimpse of the home which held her treasures. Not one word was uttered until they reached the steamer.

Miss Marsy and Laura, having gone down at an earlier hour to make some arrangements, received Helen as their guest, and resorted to various affectionate ruses to divert her, but in vain. There was a deathlike feeling of misery in that torn heart, which could not bring forth a smile.

Many persons had gone down to the steamer to see the belle off—Mrs. Murray, Emma, Alice, Marvell, Mac Tavish; even Mrs. Grantly had condescended thus far to honour Helen, more for her acknowledged title as queen of fashion than as her niece. But to the expressions of interest and regret which on all sides met her ear, our heroine could make but a sad, unmeaning return. Even to Mrs. Murray she dared say nothing. The old lady was distressed, evidently; but she did not mention the subject nearest Helen's heart.

At last the signal was given. All friends had gone, and the noble steamer, working her ponderous machinery, wended her way through the blue waters of the bay, shooting swiftly beyond the numberless vessels which surrounded her.

There is in sea-voyages, as in most things of this world, a strong similitude, and, at the same time, a strange disparity. This greatly depends upon the society one happens to meet. In days of yore, when one started with the certainty of spending several weeks at sea, efforts were made, in self-defence, to beguile the long hours, and steal from time its weariness; but now that ten days link the

two continents, Selfishness sets sail with the crowd of human beings; she is their constant companion, and lands them all in her train on the shores of noble England. There are some exceptions to this rule, however, as there are to all others; and a close contact of ten days will sometimes destroy many prejudices and create some friendships.

"How are you, dear child?" asked Laura, as she entered her cousin's state-room on the morning after their departure. "I hear you have been very ill."

"Oh, deathly!" replied the young girl, faintly. "What an awful place this is! But you do not seem to mind it."

"Not in the least. I am perfectly well, and will take care of you. Robert and I have been promenading since six o'clock. I got up with the intention of seeing the sun rise, but the old gentleman took the start of me, and stared me in the face as soon as I reached the deck."

"How is Aunt?" inquired Helen.

"Pretty well; and Arty delighted. Now do get up, Elly. Robert will carry you up-stairs, if necessary, and you will be well."

"That can never be, Laura, never!"

"Oh, we will manage it," said the young countess, smiling, unconscious of Helen's meaning.

"Do you know who I have been talking to, and who I am likely to fancy prodigiously?" continued Laura.

"No; who?"

"Mr. Dobbins. I suppose you had forgotten that he is our fellow-passenger. Olivia is perfectly well, and flourishing off with Mr. Delavan from the South, while her poor husband looks on in dismay. He is really a nice fellow, although a little ridiculous. That silly girl will thrust her happiness from her for this trifling stigma, I dare say. Now, lazy one, pray make an effort, and dress yourself."

"I cannot get up, Laura, indeed."

"You must, darling; I will send Nina to you now, and Robert soon after."

Helen had to submit, and soon found that the air brought, in fact, the only relief to her suffering.

As soon as our heroine made her appearance, many inquiring acquaintances—nay, strangers—crowded around her, and, after a few moments, Jasper Delavan managed to restore Olivia to her rightful owner, and obtain, through Robert, whom he knew slightly, an introduction to his sister.

The day passed away, and ten succeeding ones brought very little variety in their train; only, the slight occurrences of the first twenty-four hours grew into a more positive form, and became actualities. That is, Jasper Delavan was desperately in love with Helen, who had not even granted him one ray of hope. Mrs. Dobbins was still bent on captivating the young man's admiration, and Mr. Dobbins had become a positive favourite with the ladies of our party. Little Arthur, who, with infantine instinct, immediately discovered the kindness and good-nature of Olivia's husband, soon became an object of particular interest to the dejected man.

"Don't forget friend Dob," he said, as they parted on the wharf at Liverpool. "Kiss me, Arty. Farewell, farewell! I wish you were my boy."

"Arty loves Dob," said the little fellow, as he threw both arms around his friend's neck. "Good-by! Come soon;" wherewith the child was carried off by Nina, and the whole party soon settled in the best hotel. Comfortless as it was, it possessed many advantages over the steamer, and these were duly appreciated by the travellers.

"Now, my children,'" said Miss Marsy, after a rest of a few days had prepared them all for a fresh start, "we must agree upon some plan. Do we, or do we not, go to Scotland? What say you, Laura?"

"I say that the beautiful scenery of that romantic country must possess charms sufficiently great to repay one for the journey. Don't you think so, Helen?"

"I follow you, dear ones," said the young girl. "My only wish, connected with Scotland, would be to become acquainted with Mr. Mac Tavish's family; you see it is not a very powerful motive."

"There is no knowing that," said Miss Marsy. "Well, I think in this season we may venture that far north. Robert, pray make all the necessary arrangements for our departure."

It would be presumptuous on our part to attempt a description of the many lovely spots visited by our travellers, and hallowed by the beauties of Walter Scott's pen. As Laura had thought, they were fully repaid for the exertion. Their trip to Scotland furnished them with most delightful themes of conversation, and left ineffaceable impressions of nature's magnificence. In Mrs. Mac Tavish they found a most agreeable acquaintance, worthy of having superintended the mind of our noble friend Eric; and Miss Rose was indeed a lovely lassie, with bright blue eyes, and cheeks so rosy that her namesake would have blushed in spite at the competition. She was a well-educated girl, with refined but simple tastes; less elegant in her manners than the more worldly of her sex, but possessing that innate grace which is one of woman's undeniable prerogatives.

During the three weeks our ladies spent in Edinburgh, they saw a great deal of Mrs. Mac Tavish and her daughter, both anxious to express their gratitude for the many favours

Eric had received in America. Rose became a great favourite with Helen and Laura; and before they parted, solemn vows of affection and promises of correspondence were sealed between the young girls with a fond embrace.

With regret, the travellers took leave of the mountainous beauties of Scotland, and for some time they were loth to acknowledge the more artificial charms of English scenery. They visited several large cities, and at last reached London about the middle of June.

We will not tarry long in the metropolis of Great Britain. Suffice it to say, that Miss Marsy and her flock, as she called the young people, saw every thing that could be of the slightest interest, and left the great city, impressed with its magnificence and grandeur, but without a regret. After all, it is an unsatisfactory life, that of spending ten days entirely in sight-seeing, without a friendly break to remind one of the ties of affection. Later, when memory has classed all its treasures, we derive the benefit of that toilsome journey in search of the wonders of art. Well did the poet feel the truth of this when he said—"Memory is the perfume of travels." It is indeed the mysterious breath which wafts the impressions of the past toward us.

"We at last behold la belle France!" said the young countess, as, leaning on Robert's arm, she watched the evolutions of the little steamer as it entered Calais. "I have a sympathy for this fine country," added Laura—"a species of gratitude for its intervention at the time of our great national struggle."

"So have I," replied Robert; "but I don't think the feeling is general."

"'The records of revenge or hatred are engraved upon steel, and those of gratitude are traced on sand,'" continued

the young countess; "don't you remember that old saying? It is not complimentary to our fallen nature, but too true, alas! Come, Helen, cheer up! no more sickness now; here we are, almost on terra firma. A few days more will take us to Paris, where we shall enjoy a good rest, and all the resources of that queen of wonders!"

"Now, Laura," said Miss Marsy, "you speak of France in such raptures; do you know I am not at all prepared to like it. I have a very poor opinion of its inhabitants. I must say, however, that I am ashamed to acknowledge it."

"Do be ashamed to do so, dear aunt, and wait until you can judge for yourself. Our countrymen are apt to be led away by the exaggerated use of those dim spectacles called prejudice; and frequently do they make them stumble over beauties which, viewed with the naked eye, would have filled them with delight."

"True, I always said you were wiser than your old aunty. But, really, I cannot think highly of a French woman; it seems impossible that she should be every thing that is good and proper."

"Live and see," said Laura, as they landed, and once more had occasion to test the doubtful comforts of a hotel.

Two days after, our party arrived in Paris; and scarcely had twenty-four hours elapsed before Aunt Seraph exclaimed, as she gazed upon the Tuilleries, alive with a crowd of children and nurses, "Well, this is indeed a beautiful place!"

And what had Helen's feelings been during those six weeks, so full of interesting occurrences, well fitted to divert her mind from its wearing sorrow? Such had not been the case, however; nothing seemed to revive her spirits; and, day after day, Laura strove in vain to discover the

wound and apply a healing balm. Helen felt alone in the world; nothing could fill the void which Walter's death had left in her heart; the link of love woven in so mysterious a manner was broken, and hope had fled. Letters from home alone seemed to bring a little change to the state of melancholy into which she had fallen.

Several from Mrs. Leeson and Anna were joyfully welcomed by the travellers. Every mention of home called forth smiles and tears, and pleasant were the evenings passed in perusing these valuable epistles. In London, Helen received a long letter from Alice Irving, and, as it was the bearer of some interesting news, perhaps an extract from it might not be amiss here. After expressing in a most affectionate manner the sadness she had felt at parting with her friends, the little Quakeress added—

"Yes, dear Elly, a great revolution has taken place in our household since you left. Whether some good genius has visited Aunt Martha and reasoned in my favour, or whether the old lady happened to remember that she had been young once upon a time, I cannot tell; but she told mother, a few weeks ago, that she thought I must have a little company, that young people required it, and suggested my receiving a few friends now and then; adding that she would furnish the entertainment. Is not this a wonder quite as astonishing as the seven of the ancients? To tell you the truth, I suspect that wise old head of Laura's; she managed it, I know. Pray tell her, dearest, how thankful I feel; and, really, I am better, more amiable, a great deal, than I was: this constant craving for an innocent and unattainable pleasure makes one cross and sour betimes.

"So much for myself. Of your mother and father and sweet Anna I need not say much, as I know the latter is writing to you, and who can compete with her pure

eloquence? I always tell Anna she has secret dealings with the angels; very proper persons to be acquainted with, no doubt, but, somehow or other, I have a decided preference for less ethereal beings. So has Cora Dalton, it appears, for her engagement with Sir Archibald Courtnay was given out on Thursday. They say no house in New York is large enough to contain her felicity; it is entirely too visible for my taste. I saw her yesterday, and it was crushing, indeed. What a pity you would not smile upon him, Elly! though, indeed, he is terribly insignificant, and one don't fancy being condemned to everlasting companionship with such a husband. All for the best, no doubt; since I have acquired some experience of the world and man's deceit, I have a very poor opinion of the harsher sex. Don't communicate my impressions to Robert; he might not be flattered; but tell him I expect to see wisdom personified when he returns to us. Paris, they say, however, is no place for accomplishing such a metamorphosis. Farewell, dearest; best love to Aunt Seraph, my sweet Laura, and precious little Arty. Tasso, whom I sometimes see next door, is as sullen as a lover deprived of his mistress. Farewell! Truly your devoted and loving friend, ALICE I.

"P.S.—I never could send a letter without this little extra. I forgot to mention that Grace Orland, Emma, and I have got *mighty* thick. Pray excuse my familiar style, Miss Leeson, and tell me soon what you thought of Scotland, and especially of Miss Rose Mac Tavish. This time, farewell!"

Alice's cheerful letter was greatly appreciated by her friends. Helen was pleased to hear of the happy change which had occurred in the young girl's life, but not one thought did she give to Cora Dalton's conquest. No; it

passed from her memory like the ripple upon the water, leaving no trace whatever.

"Did you deliver the letters I gave you this morning, Robert?" said Miss Marsy to her nephew, as the family sat at dinner, about a week after their arrival.

"Yes; and fortunately found no one at home."

"Fortunately!" repeated Laura; "what a savage you are, my dear coz. Pray, why do you consider yourself so lucky?"

"Because I would have been obliged to play the agreeable, and I can't bear any thing artificial."

"Why not make it natural?"

"Can't do it, Laura dear—except in your presence. Now let me give you an account of my mission. Madame de Mornay is out of town, at her château; Madame de Cerny, who is in Paris, was out with her daughters; and Mr. Lawrence, Marvell's friend, is travelling. So we shall, I hope, not see any of them for some time. I met a quondam friend of mine, Tom Harris, who promised to call on you. He is a would-be young beau, of sound forty, very well preserved—thanks to the many little secrets used by the Parisian artists!"

"I see we are not likely to be very dissipated," said Miss Marsy, smiling. "It suits me exactly; but on your account, girls, I should have liked to know a little of French society."

"Don't feel the slightest concern about us, aunt," said Helen. "Paris possesses charms sufficient to compensate for the loss of society; and really I think we would not enjoy seeing people whom we do not know at all. My only regret is, not being able to tell Mrs. Murray any thing about her friend, Madame de Mornay; she spoke so highly of her!"

Dinner being over, the party adjourned to the parlour. Aunt Seraph took the Galignani, Robert went out to smoke his cigar, while Laura and Helen sat down on the carpet to have a game with little Arthur, who was left to their care while Nina took her meal.

The little fellow was in high spirits, running from his cousin to his mother, kissing both, and creating great havoc in their dresses. Laura's fine hair hung loose on her shoulders, and Helen was in the act of arranging it, when the servant opened the parlour door and announced—

"The Viscount de Mornay."

Both ladies started up in an instant, and made their exit, leaving Miss Marsy to explain their conduct to the stranger, who advanced toward her with that ease of manner which bespeaks a gentleman in all countries.

"I received Mr. Leeson's card and Mrs. Murray's letter to my mother, this morning," said the viscount in English; "a few weeks ago, that lady was kind enough to apprise us of your intention to visit Paris. I have, I believe, the honour of addressing Miss Marsy."

"Yes, sir," replied Aunt Seraph; "and I am very happy to meet a friend of Mrs. Murray—one of whom she thinks so highly."

"She is very kind, and we are truly attached to her," replied the young man; "in fact, all I have seen of the Americans has given me a strong desire to become better acquainted with them."

"Such an opinion is truly flattering to us," answered the old lady; then, turning to Laura and Helen, who entered the room, she added: "Allow me to introduce you to my niece, Miss Leeson, and the Countess Marini, M. de Mornay."

"We have heard a great deal of you, sir," said Laura,

who generally spoke for the whole party; "and knowing that Madame de Mornay was out of town, we were afraid we would not have the pleasure of making her acquaintance."

"My mother is indeed in the country; but her summer residence, the Château de Valprés, is only a few leagues from Paris, and I trust you will make us a visit there. It is an old castle, which may possess some charms in the eyes of American travellers."

"Certainly," continued the countess. "Helen, I think you told me Mrs. Murray had described the Château de Valprés to you."

"Yes, she gave me a beautiful description of it; but her account of the grandeur and magnificence of the place were trifling, compared to her eulogium of Madame de Mornay—her kindness and amiable manners."

"Mrs. Murray and my mother were great friends," replied the young man. "They parted with regret, and at that time I promised to make George a visit in America; but some family matters have since then prevented my executing that plan. How do you like Paris, mademoiselle?" continued M. de Mornay, addressing himself to Miss Marsy.

"We have seen very little of it as yet. As far as my knowledge goes, I think it a very fine city."

"I hope you will be induced to remain some time with us."

"A few weeks, I think, that these ladies may visit all the wonders of your great capital."

"I shall be most happy to be your guide; my experience may be of some use to you. It would afford me infinite pleasure."

"We accept your kind offer, M. de Mornay," said

Laura, "and apologize now in anticipation of the ennui we may cause you."

"That would be quite impossible, I assure you. This is not a very propitious season for seeing Paris. We have nothing very good at the theatres; but still, as a novelty, it may be amusing. You must allow me to send you my mother's box at the opera for to-morrow night. I will meet you there, as I suppose Mr. Leeson will be your escort."

"Certainly: we are really indebted to you," said Miss Marsy. "I do not go to the theatre; but my nieces will, no doubt, be most happy to avail themselves of your kind offer."

Laura and Helen having expressed their satisfaction at the arrangement, the young man took leave of the ladies, reiterating his gracious expressions of devotion.

"I have quite a headache to-night, girls," said Aunt Seraph, after having passed a most exalted opinion of their guest; "and I am going to bed. Robert is off to some place of amusement. You will have to entertain each other until Morpheus claims you as his own."

"How very poetical, dear aunt!" replied Laura, kissing the kind friend.

"Good-night, my darling! Elly, dear child, sleep well," continued Aunt Seraph, "and do be a little more cheerful!"

"Now, cousin," said the young countess, as she sat in an arm-chair, "come here near me, and let us have a chat about that handsome Gustave, whom I like amazingly. What say you of his stylish appearance and aristocratic manners?"

"I was very much pleased with him; agreeably disappointed—for I thought he must be stiff and affected."

"Not in the least; he just strikes my fancy; and, from what Mrs. Murray said of him, I should think he was an excellent young man. I wish he could win your heart, Helen!"

"A poor prize it would be, Laura. You don't know what a blighted thing that heart is!"

So saying, she took a low seat at Laura's feet, and rested her head on her cousin's lap.

"Nonsense, darling!" said the young countess, as she patted the pale cheek and stooped to kiss away the tear which fell upon it. "Helen, you are nervous and home-sick, or else you are in love."

"Neither; but I have a painful sensation of undefinable misery which I cannot control."

"What is this around your neck, dearest?" asked Laura, anxious to divert the young girl's attention. "A gold chain? Oh! let me look at it. What! a mystery?" she added, as Helen pressed her hands on her bosom, as if to arrest Laura's curiosity. Suddenly, however, as though struck by an inspiration, she drew from it a small locket which hung on the chain, and gave it to Laura.

"Helen, is it possible!" exclaimed the young countess. "And was it so? Did you love him?"

"I did," sobbed the poor child, burying her head in her hands.

"Why did you not tell me? I might have written to him. Poor fellow! that so much happiness should have been his, and he not know it! I do pity you, dearest."

"Oh, Laura! God only knows what I have endured, all alone. Do you think he hated me? Were his last words a curse upon my cruelty?"

"No! Walter's nature was too noble to admit of such a feeling. I rather think he must have blessed you, for

his was a pure, disinterested affection. He certainly gave proof of it."

"Oh, yes! He was noble, kind-hearted, so patient; and I, proud, arrogant spirit, did not grant him one look of mercy. That thought breaks my heart."

Helen related to her adopted sister every phase of her mysterious love. It was a terrible effort, which made her cheek turn alternately pale and crimson; but it brought relief. There was a strange similarity in the fate of the cousins, which rendered them still more dear to each other. Laura's experience inspired words of sympathy and comfort, which soothed the aching spirit; and after that sweet communion with a fellow-sufferer, Helen's heart was alleviated of an immense weight of anguish. She felt more resigned; and, quite determined to remain faithful to the memory of her husband, a life of meek submission dawned upon the young girl.

"We will bear our cross together, dearest," said the countess. "Affection is the blessed staff which God has provided for the weary traveller through the toilsome journey of life. It is the pure light which disperses the gloom of sorrow, and makes all things possible. Now, good-night, darling; and pray keep no more secrets to your own little self. Few young hearts are large enough to contain such cares;" and, with a playful caress, the cousins parted.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE day after his visit to the Hôtel Meurice, the Viscount de Mornay wrote as follows to his mother:—

"I am still under the influence of the beautiful vision which I saw last evening. Mr. Leeson, whom Mrs. Murray recommended to us lately, arrived in Paris, a few days ago, with his aunt, sister, and cousin. As he left his card and letter of introduction here yesterday, I thought myself, as a true worshipper of the fair sex, in duty bound to pay my respects to those ladies immediately. I accordingly called upon them in the evening, and was fully repaid for the slight exertion. Nothing can be more charming than the two cousins. The Countess Marini is fair, with soft blue eyes, and exquisite light curls. She is lovely, but cannot compare with the Grecian beauty of 'la belle Hélène.' If her namesake in days of yore was half as bewitching, poor Paris is more to be pitied than blamed. Such features, such an air of refinement and elegance! I was completely fascinated, and look forward to seeing those ladies this evening at the opera with great pleasure. Now, dear mother, I am sure you intend to show Mrs. Murray's friends some politeness. Pray let me know how it shall be shaped. I am ready to act any part you choose to assign to me, even that of devoted lover to Miss Leeson. Farewell. Ever your own

"GUSTAVE."

The viscount met Laura, Helen, and Robert at the

theatre. A very agreeable evening increased the interest and good feeling which their first interview had created. As the young man had announced to his guests, the performance was by no means equal to those which the fastidious Parisians are accustomed to. But, the scenery and choruses being fair, and the orchestra very good, upon the whole it was very gratifying to the travellers; and several hours glided away before they were aware of it.

On the following day, while the ladies were preparing for a drive to the Bois de Boulogne, Madame de Cerny and her daughters were announced.

Miss Marsy's toilet being less elaborate than that of her nieces, she was the only one ready to receive the strangers.

Madame de Cerny was an elderly person, not at all handsome, but extremely genteel in her appearance, of easy and agreeable manners. As she was not familiar with the English language, and as Aunt Seraph's prejudices had prevented her ever devoting much study to French, it was with difficulty that the two ladies exchanged those simple civilities which lead to general conversation.

"My daughter Blanche speaks English very well," said Madame de Cerny.

In fact, the young girl proved a most capable and eloquent interpreter: and she was in the act of transferring a gracious expression from her mother to Miss Marsy, when Laura and Helen came in; and as both were excellent French scholars, Aunt Seraph was partially relieved of her responsibility as a hostess.

Blanche and Isaure de Cerny were fine, stylish-looking girls. Isaure was the more showy of the two, but Blanche decidedly the prettier—of that French prettiness which does not consist in extreme regularity of features, but in that grace of expression which is an irresistible

charm; one which regular beauty does not always possess. There was so much intelligence in those large black eyes, so much bewitching softness in the heavy lashes which vailed them, that one could not pause to consider whether the mouth, which displayed those exquisite teeth, was not too large for the criterion of perfection. In short, Blanche was considered a beauty; and although the fair of her native land have frequently been accused of overrating their advantages, that reproach could not be addressed to Mademoiselle de Cerny.

Both sisters were extremely modest and retiring in their manners, agreeable, and possessing a great fund of conversation, but without the slightest aim at brilliancy—ever seeking the protecting knowledge of their mother. There may be some objections to French education in general; but in this particular point—the moral dependence of children on their parents—they are to be admired and copied.

Notwithstanding her strong disapprobation of French manners, customs, etc., Aunt Seraph could not help acknowledging to Laura that she had been very much pleased with the three ladies. "But," she added, "they must be exceptions. All I have heard of French women was very different."

Among the many who have written on such subjects, how few there are who have had the opportunity of a thorough acquaintance with those whom they thus criticise, and whose character they attempt to describe, as though it were a passing landscape, without further investigation!

After Madame de Cerny and her daughters had left, our ladies started for their drive to the Bois de Boulogne, little Arthur being one of the party.

The Parisian world of fashion was out of town; but there were still many elegant equipages to be seen. The

Champs Elysées were crowded with pedestrians, all more or less cheerful, but appearing to appreciate their recreation exceedingly.

What a benefit those public parks and gardens are to the masses of human beings whom fate has condemned to live in close, unhealthy lodgings, and who, like the caged bird, sigh for space and air! An hour spent in the enjoyment of these blessings will give the sufferer new life and courage to resume his painful labour.

"Happiness lies in fancy." To a certain extent, this is true. Is it not essential, then, that those deprived of real happiness should be provided with the recreation essential to man, both morally and physically, thus furnishing the mind with food adequate to supply the absence of actual pleasure? This is not sufficiently considered in our country. The blessed prosperity which has always shone upon our people has not rendered those minute details of human economy of vital importance; but let adversity, care, misery in its appalling reality, settle as a permanent resident in our population, then will the want of those places of resort, which all can benefit from, be felt. Money! money! Measure the joys and comforts of your fellow-beings by that metallic standard, and see what the consequences will be!

But, led away by a sincere wish to benefit the less-favoured portion of mankind, whom the Saviour has pointed out as our brethren, we have wandered far from our subject, and must return with our little elf, Fancy, to the carriage wherein kind Aunt Seraph and her nieces are enjoying the beauties of the Bois de Boulogne, and attracting a great deal of attention—almost too much for their satisfaction, and quite enough to make Robert exclaim—

"These Frenchmen are mighty impertinent fellows,

by Jove! I would like to give them a piece of my mind!"

"A hard matter, my dear fellow, as you do not speak their language," said Laura, laughing. "And, pray, of what consequence is it that they should look at us? Helen and I do not attach any importance to their scrutiny of our foreign air."

"How happy I am to meet you, ladies!" said M. de Mornay, as he rode up to the carriage; "I hope your uninteresting evening at the opera did not give you too much annoyance."

"Oh, no!—on the contrary, it was most agreeable," answered Laura. "What a beautiful horse you are riding, M. de Mornay!"

"A pet of mine, to whom I have given an English title —Fox. Do you ride, ladies?"

"Sometimes; that is, my cousin is an experienced horsewoman, but I am too timid," replied the countess.

"It would give me great pleasure to be your escort, Miss Leeson," said the young man. "My mother has an excellent lady's horse, which M'lle Blanche de Cerny, whom you know, I believe, has ridden very often; he is perfectly safe. Will you not allow me to have him at your orders in a few days?"

'Certainly," said Laura. "My cousin will not answer for herself, because she is so very discreet; but I know she will enjoy it exceedingly."

"My mother will be in town to-morrow," continued the young man. "She is most anxious to make your acquaintance. I hope we will prevail upon you to name a day to make us a visit at Valprés. I feel confident you will fancy the old castle."

"I have no doubt," said Miss Marsy, who had taken

the secret resolution of declining Madame de Mornay's invitation.

The young viscount took leave of the ladies, and they proceeded on their drive. Little Arthur having become restless and anxious to run about, the party alighted, and the child was enjoying the sport, when he suddenly exclaimed—"Friend Dob! friend Dob!"

It was, in fact, Mr. and Mrs. Dobbins, promenading, at the fashionable slow pace, in the avenues; both apparently little diverted and under evident restraint.

"How are you, my darling boy?" said the worthy fellow, as he caught the child up in his arms. "Why, you have grown so tall! And what a fine cap Arty has on! Good-morning, ladies," added Mr. Dobbins, shaking hands with all in a most sociable manner; "I am so happy to meet you! not a familiar face have I seen since we arrived here."

Olivia had already exchanged some greeting with her New York friends. But a great change had taken place in her appearance since they parted at Liverpool. She was dressed in the height of fashion, and had adopted what is called the French style of expressing one's self; that is, great affectation. As far as our experience goes, we have generally found that those who imitated the French women were infinitely more artificial than they are themselves. It was the case with Olivia. She had made several acquaintances among the ultra-fashionables, and in attempting to raise her style and manners to their criterion, she had overleaped the mark, and stood in the full possession of unconscious ridicule.

Poor Dobbins, who was a mere echo of his high-toned lady, dared not make the least observation; but his sensitive nature was sorely crushed, and more than once he had wished himself amid the wilds of India.

"We are staying at Meurice's, Mr. Dobbins," said Laura: "do come and see us very often. Arty is so fond of you; he talks incessantly of your kind feats in his favour on board the Atlantic."

"I will come very soon," answered the dejected husband, as he hastened to join his better, or rather worse, half, who had flounced off at some distance from her American friends.

"It is getting late," said Miss Marsy; "come, my children, let us return to the carriage; you know Robert has promised you a treat for this evening."

And the party returned to the hotel.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"It is perfectly ridiculous in you, Laura, to oblige me to go to Madame de Mornay's," said Miss Marsy, as she rose from the breakfast-table, a few days after her drive to the Bois.

"Ridiculous! why so, my dear aunt?" answered the countess.

"Of course; what kind of a figure will I cut among all those French people, with their fine airs and elaborate dressing?"

"Did you notice any thing of that sort in Madame de Mornay?" asked Laura. "I think I heard you say she was a charming woman—one of the most agreeable you had ever met with."

"Certainly, I think so; but you know, Laura, she is an exception; her company must be very different."

"Now, Aunt Seraph," said the countess, laughing, "allow me to remind you of a fact. You said that Madame de Cerny and her daughters were exceptions; Madame de Mornay being another, where, then, is the unexceptionable rule upon which your opinion of French ladies is founded?"

"Well, I don't know; but the fact is, I would rather not accompany you to-day. Methinks three of our party are quite enough to assail the Château de Valprés."

"With such an invitation as we received from Madame de Mornay," said Laura, "I would have no objection to spending a week with her. And besides, aunt, you must go,

because I never could tell a fib without blushing; and how can I apologize for your absence?"

"Say I am ill—engaged—any thing you please."

"No, I will not give up to you this time; and if you do not dress immediately to go with us, we will quarrel, Miss Marsy."

As usual, Laura won her point, and the old friend, after having appealed to her niece for various little suggestions regarding her cap, and having declared repeatedly that she was making a fool of herself, entered the parlour at ten o'clock, fully equipped for the encounter of a real French party.

A few moments afterward, M. de Mornay called for the ladies, and in half an hour they were comfortably seated in the cars, Arty and Nina included, the little fellow having received an especial invitation.

The trip proved a most agreeable one. The young viscount was full of wit and amusing anecdotes; and as they passed the spots which possessed any interest, he pointed them out to the travellers, saying—

"But we cannot compete with you as regards picturesque scenery. I read, a few days ago, one of M. de Cerny's letters to his father, in which he gives an exquisite description of Niagara."

"No one can speak more eloquently of the beauties of nature than M. de Cerny," said Helen. "I had the pleasure of hearing him once on his favourite theme: it was most gratifying. He must be an excellent man, for he speaks from the fulness of his heart, and his narratives are beaming with charity."

"He is indeed a noble fellow, and it is very painful for his mother to be so often separated from him. For many years he has devoted his whole attention to scientific pur-

suits, to accomplish which he has of course been obliged to travel a great deal."

"I hope you will take a fancy to locomotion also, M. Gustave," said Robert, who had become quite intimate with the young Frenchman, much to Aunt Seraph's dread. The old lady was not aware of her nephew's being already an adept in all the evils he might have acquired from the Parisians.

"How far is your place from here?" asked Laura, as they stopped at one of the stations.

"Only one league. We will be there very soon. Now, Master Arthur, come here to me, and tell me how you like Paris."

"Very well; very pretty," said the little man, with a smile, and a pull at the young man's watch.

"Since I have had the honour of your acquaintance, I never thought of asking you whether you were fond of music, ladies, or rather whether you were musical?" said M. de Mornay.

"All very fond of it," answered Laura; "and this quiet lady here has a magnificent voice, worthy of better judges than we are."

"How delighted my mother will be to hear you!" said the viscount; "she is so extravagantly fond of music."

"Oh! I would not sing in Paris on any account," replied Helen. "Pray, do not ask me; I should be frightened to death."

"How ridiculous!" said Laura.

"We will claim the intervention of your authority, Miss Marsy," added the young man.

"Oh! I have none, sir; not the least; these ladies manage me entirely," said Aunt Seraph, smiling.

"Here we are!" exclaimed little Arthur, as the cars stopped, and he saw M. de Mornay leap out and offer his hand to the ladies.

"Pray, follow me," he said; "my mother's carriage must be waiting for us. Here are two at our orders. We will occupy this one; Etienne can take charge of Master Arthur and his nurse."

The party started, and in a short time they entered the gates of the Park de Valprés.

"What immense trees! This is almost a forest," said Miss Marsy. "One might fancy oneself a hundred miles from Paris. And these pretty little deer are so tame; what graceful creatures!"

"Mother does not allow any shooting on this side of her property, and these fellows are quite sociable."

"I am delighted to see you, ladies," said Madame de Mornay, coming forward to receive her guests, as they alighted from the carriage. "It is so kind in you to come this distance! But the Americans, I believe, are the best travellers in the world."

"With such an inducement as we had to-day," replied the countess, "we would have undertaken a much longer journey. The trip appeared very short in such good company," she added, turning toward M. de Mornay.

The young man bowed, and then offered his arm to Miss Marsy to escort her to the parlour, where five or six ladies and gentlemen were already assembled.

"My guests are compelled to devote the whole day to me, as there are no means of communicating with Paris except morning and evening," said the amiable hostess. "I am the gainer by this arrangement. Will you take this seat, Miss Marsy? You are, I believe, acquainted with Madame de Cerny and her daughters? Let me

introduce Madame Dorival to you; she speaks English perfectly."

"Will you not allow me to take you to my room, mademoiselle?" said Blanche de Cerny to Helen: "it will be more convenient for you to leave your bonnets and shawls there; and this little gentleman no doubt requires a rest."

"Yes, Blanche, take charge of the Countess Marini and Miss Leeson," said Madame de Mornay. "Miss Marsy will be kind enough to follow me through this old-fashioned labyrinth. I want you to take a look at this old place before we settle down for the day. You know you are mine until nine o'clock this evening. Gustave will escort you to Paris."

"I should be distressed to give him so much trouble."

"Don't mention it, pray. My son has been brought up with a slight tinge of chivalry; and for a great deal I would not that he should be less attentive to ladies."

Let us pause one moment to say a few words of Mrs. Murray's friend, while she is doing the honours of her residence with truly Creole grace and hospitality, and obtaining more and more regard from her guests.

Madame de Mornay had been a beautiful woman, and still possessed sufficient personal charms to elicit a great deal of admiration from those who study and appreciate the exquisite outline of a regular profile. She might have been forty, but was certainly not fifty. A judicious selection of becoming and appropriate dress rendered a positive knowledge of her age a difficult matter. But that was of trifling consequence; in fact, one was never tempted to discuss the point, for Madame de Mornay's extreme affability of manners won all hearts to her at once. She was a general favourite, possessed many friends, young and old, and to

the tastes and dispositions of all she conformed with that elasticity of intellect and feeling which springs from a cultivated mind and a noble heart.

"Now, my dear Miss Marsy," said the lady of Valprés, as she led her guests into the dining-room, where a lunch was prepared, "I hope you will like our little intimate circle. I selected those whom I thought might be congenial to you, with the addition of a few young people to entertain your nieces."

"I have no doubt your friends are charming," answered Aunt Seraph, whose charitable feelings were gradually getting the better of her prejudices.

After lunch, the party repaired to the drawing-room, which was furnished with comfort and elegance, but none of that crushing splendour which struck us so disagreeably in Mrs. Seyton's magnificent residence. Every article of furniture which could contribute to comfort or pleasure had been crowded in that spacious saloon. Soft arm-chairs and lounges of all styles, tables for work or cards, others covered with fine engravings. On many stood vases of flowers, reflected in the large mirrors which hung around the room, giving it that cheerful appearance which no amount of gilding can produce. How true the remark, that mirrors are to a drawing-room what water is to a landscape!

We must not forget to mention one of Erard's fine pianos, whose melodious strains so often charmed the ramblers, when, after a long stroll in the grounds, they returned to the parlour to luxuriate in the many intellectual pursuits of which it contained the elements.

Madame de Cerny and the other ladies were engaged in some elegant feminine occupation when Madame de Mornay and her American friends entered. All rose to make

room for them, and the conversation soon ran on various interesting topics; it was carried on principally in French; but Madame Dorival addressed her remarks in English to Aunt Seraph, translating also, for her benefit, the most striking points in the general conversation.

"We cannot think of spending the morning without having a little music," said the hostess. "Ladies, I claim your daily contribution to our enjoyment. Mademoiselle Isaure's usual compliance with our desires will, I trust, display itself on this occasion," added Madame de Mornay, smiling.

Mademoiselle de Cerny rose immediately and executed several reminiscences from different operas; after which Miss Blanche sang, in an artistical manner, an Italian cavatina.

Helen listened with intense satisfaction to the scientific performance of both ladies; but an annoying feeling of dread crept over her as she saw the viscount whisper to his mother. Madame de Mornay went up to Helen, and, taking her hand, gently obliged her to rise, saying—

"Miss Leeson, my son has just told me that you sang; we claim the privilege of hearing you."

"Oh, no; I cannot, indeed!" said Helen; "after such beautiful singing, mine would sound very discordantly to your musical ear."

"Allow us to judge of that. Now, only one little song! After that, we will take a walk. I have many pretty things to show you."

Finding that it was impossible to refuse—Laura having encouraged Madame de Mornay in her request, by asserting that her cousin had a very good voice—Helen, who had received excellent lessons in New York, and who really could sing well, selected a simple song from Miss Blanche's

portfolio, and, with much hesitation, at last succeeded in accomplishing the great feat of singing before a French audience: her emotion having increased the richness of her voice, it produced a wonderful effect.

"How exquisite!" exclaimed Madame de Mornay. "Would it not have been cruel in you to deprive us of so much pleasure?"

Gustave was sparing of his praise, but he was evidently charmed; and Laura, who, as Alice Irving had remarked, was wonderfully wise, watched with satisfaction the increasing admiration of the young viscount for her cousin.

"Now, shall I show you this old place, its grounds, and fine trees, before dinner?" asked Madame de Mornay.

"Certainly, dear madame," replied the countess.

Some of the ladies joined the party, and the others retired to their respective apartments.

The Château de Valprés had been built some three hundred years; and although the interior distribution had been altered, in order to introduce the improvements of this fastidious age, it still retained that stamp of antiquity which to the lovers of romance is so full of interest. It was situated upon an eminence commanding a view of the surrounding country. The park and grounds were extensive, and laid out in the English style. But what was most striking and novel to the looker-on was the immense lawn or prairie, which for nearly a quarter of a mile extended its emerald plain, producing the effect of a sheet of water. At night, by moonlight, when a slight vapour arose from the dewy grass, the delusion was complete.

Miss Marsy, who was a genuine lover of nature's charms, was delighted with the many attractions of the old domain. She was bountiful in its praise; and once, as Laura hap-

pened to pass near her aunt, she said, hurriedly—"How sorry I should have been to miss all these beautiful sights!"

Madame de Mornay led her guests through her spacious green-houses. From there, they went to the pheasantry, and had occasion to admire many rustic constructions, which displayed not only a great deal of taste, but an uncommon regard for the comfort of the little feathered tribe, who were thus deprived of their native air and liberty to gratify the fancy of man. Farther on, they saw the park, in which the deer found a warm shelter in winter. There were several at rest, and with graceful shyness they came forward to receive a caress or a morsel of cake from the visitors.

An hour was thus spent very agreeably; and when they returned to the château, Madame de Mornay invited the ladies to rest in her boudoir while she retired to dress for dinner.

"Who can this be?" said Laura, as she rose from a lounge, attracted to the window by the noise of horses.

"What a handsome woman!" added Helen; "but a very masculine-looking person. Ah! M. de Mornay is assisting her to dismount. I suppose she is going to dine here."

Helen was not mistaken. As Miss Marsy and her nieces entered the drawing-room, they found quite an addition to the party they had met there in the morning. Several gentlemen had arrived from Paris; and the Amazon who had attracted their attention, having changed her riding-habit for an elegant toilet, was reclining upon one of the sofas, surrounded by three or four admirers, whom she appeared to be entertaining in a most absorbing manner.

All, however, turned around as the American ladies made their appearance, and a scrutinizing glance was for an

instant riveted upon the cousins. Generally speaking, foreigners are greatly appreciated in Paris, and real beauty receives more incense there than elsewhere. It was not astonishing, therefore, that Laura and Helen should have excited such an expression of admiration, silent as it was.

Madame de Lorville, accustomed to the undisputed homage of the inmates of Valprés, was not exactly charmed with the slight diversion which the entrance of our ladies produced. She was a consummate coquette—a second and more experienced Mrs. Seyton; that is, to obtain the same success, she required more skill. Madame de Lorville was not a favourite with Gustave's mother; but as they were neighbours and visited the same circle in Paris, and as M. de Lorville was an influential man, it was a difficult matter to keep the lady at a visiting distance.

"I did not intend that you should meet this giddy little creature here to-day," whispered Madame de Mornay to Miss Marsy, as they were about going in to dinner; "but I could not avoid inviting her. After all, she may perhaps amuse the younger members of our circle; she is full of wit, but not as refined as I think a woman should be."

Helen and Laura, who sat at table on either side of the viscount, were very much entertained by the many eccentricities of the Parisian *lionne*, for Madame de Lorville was entitled to that distinction.

The dinner was served in excellent style—every delicacy had been provided; and the servants in attendance were so well trained, that, notwithstanding the elaborate routine of French entertainments, not more than two hours were spent at table.

The conversation was very intellectual. Madame de Mornay, with tact and knowledge of the world, had as-

signed to her guests such seats as would place them in contact with congenial persons. Thus, Robert was completely fascinated by Mademoiselle Isaure de Cerny, and Aunt Seraph felt quite at home with Madame Dorival as a neighbour. The others knew each other sufficiently well to trust to chance or to their own resources.

At eight o'clock the company had left the dining-room, and the coffee having been served, the carriage was announced.

"The cars wait for no one, unfortunately," said the amiable hostess, as she parted with her friends. "Now that you are acquainted with us all, do come soon again. Can you not spend a few days with me?"

"I am afraid not," replied Miss Marsy; "our time is limited. In two weeks we leave for Switzerland, and I would like to reach Naples before September."

"Well, I shall claim you on your return, and I hope to see you soon in Paris." So saying, Madame de Mornay offered her arm to Helen, to escort her to the carriage.

"Pray, tell me, Miss Leeson," she added, "whether Mrs. Murray had heard from Mr. Grey before you left? We saw him several times, and thought very highly of him; but my son read the announcement of his death in the newspaper a few months ago. Where did he die?"

"At Rome, I believe," said Helen, with a faltering voice.

"Poor young man! how sad! Good-evening, ladies. My son will take excellent care of you."

It was a fine moonlight night, and as the visitors caught a last glimpse of the old castle, all expressed their admiration of its antique beauties.

Its towers and peaked turrets darting through the cloudless sky; the clusters of noble trees, which for centuries

had stood the silent witnesses of passing events; the many lights which shone from the Gothic windows, animating the dark mass of stone,—all gave it a peculiar, fairy-like appearance, which was most striking to those whose native land boasted no monuments of the past.

The trip to Paris was agreeable to all except Helen, who had not recovered from the emotion caused by Madame de Mornay's mention of Walter.

Little Arthur, whom we had quite forgotten in the description of the day's pleasures, but who had taken an active part in them, slept soundly on Nina's lap; while Laura, Robert, and even Miss Marsy, were in excellent spirits, and kept up a most animated conversation with Gustave de Mornay.

The young Frenchman entertained them with many lively anecdotes about Madame de Lorville and her old husband, and mentioned other neighbours, whose peculiarities were described by him with graphic wit.

"But you do not tell us any thing about Madame de Cerny and her pretty daughters," said Laura.

"Oh! Mademoiselle Isaure is worldly and highly accomplished; but Blanche is an angel—so kind and charitable, so devoted to the sufferers of this world! She is called by the villagers, around here, the 'Lily of the Valley.' You know she is remarkably fair."

"You possess excellent descriptive powers, M. de Mornay," said Helen, who had been roused by the poetical name the young man had given Blanche de Cerny.

"They would be ineffectual to convey a correct idea of the beauty of some of nature's works," added the viscount, with a peculiar intonation.

"Well, I have seldom seen a sweeter face than that of Miss Blanche," said Robert; "and her manners are ex-

quisite; although, I must say, there is something perfectly irresistible in her sister's fine eye."

The conversation continued until the travellers had reached their hotel. M. de Mornay promised to escort the ladies to Versailles and Fontainebleau. In fact, it was evident that he was charmed with one of the cousins, and sought every opportunity of being in their company.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"ANOTHER dinner-party!" exclaimed Miss Marsy, two or three days after her visit to the Château de Valprés. "Now, girls, I cannot stand all this dissipation. You made me spend last evening at Mme. de Cerny's, who came in from the country on purpose to receive us, this warm weather: it was too bad! and we must be off again to Ville d'Avray, to see Mrs. Dallas. I can't go!"

"Now, now, aunty dear, be calm, and let us reason with you," said Laura. "Have you not been compelled to acknowledge that our visits to Madame de Mornay and Madame de Cerny were most agreeable? Have you not confessed to me—very reluctantly, perhaps—that your opinion of French women was totally different now from the sad, near-sighted one you brought with you; that many possessed every quality which one can desire in a friend; that they have proper and refined feelings on all subjects? This you are now convinced of; therefore, allow me still to be your guide, and do not deprive yourself, willingly, of spending another pleasant day with Mrs. Dallas, whom we knew at home, and who is one of the brightest specimens of our countrywomen."

"Well, well, I will go. But, Laura, while we are alone, tell me what you think of M. de Mornay. He seems desperately in love with one of you girls, but I cannot find out which," added Aunt Seraph.

"Why, it is just as evident as possible," said the young countess; "and I am delighted, for I think he will make a capital husband."

"But," interrogated Miss Marsy, a little annoyed, "that does not tell me who he is courting."

"Not me, dearest," replied Laura, smiling.

"Very well. Does she fancy him?"

"Helen will not be won easily," said Laura. "She thinks very highly of Gustave; but there is little love for him, I fear, in her heart."

"I don't know much about it," continued Miss Marsy, "but I should think any one could fancy that noble fellow. He and his mother have quite captivated me."

"I told you so!" said the countess, with an arch look; "now, pray, be ready for three o'clock. Ville d'Avray is very near Paris; we will drive out in an hour, and return by moonlight. By-the-by, Olivia and her husband are to be there, and several Americans."

As Laura had said, Mrs. Dallas was a charming woman—a genuine lady in feelings and manners. She held a high social position in the American circle, and by her amiability she had acquired the rare advantage of being admired, and not envied, by her large circle of friends.

During the summer months, Mrs. Dallas occupied a country-seat at Ville d'Avray, one of the villages which surround Paris. It was a lovely spot, with a fine garden and park, all on a small scale, but laid out with taste, and that peculiar genius with which the French concentrate so many beauties in a limited space.

When our party arrived at Mrs. Dallas's little château, they were greeted by the hostess with a truly American welcome. It was a sweet reminiscence of home to hear

pure English, and to talk over various topics which they had not heard of since they left New York.

"We have seen more of French society than of our countrymen," said Miss Marsy, in answer to some inquiries made by Mrs. Dallas regarding their stay in Paris. "I like them exceedingly, but still I cannot feel at home with them."

"Of course not; we always sympathize more readily with those we know and understand thoroughly. Don't you think so, countess?"

"Well, I have found it an easy task to appreciate and to become acquainted with those whom I have had the pleasure of meeting here; and, generally speaking, I think the society of the country you visit is better than that of the foreigners who have settled in it. Present company excepted, of course," added Laura, laughing.

We should add, in extenuation of this rather strange remark, that Laura knew Mrs. Dallas very well, and was certain that she would not mistake her meaning.

"You may be right," said the lady. "I have sometimes thought so myself; but it is difficult to see both French and Americans, except in a formal manner. Ah! Mr. Harris! good-morning," she added, addressing a gentleman who was just entering the parlour. "Let me introduce you to Miss Marsy, the Countess Marini, Miss Leeson."

The stranger bowed in a very stiff and precise manner to each lady as her name was mentioned, and said—

"Parole d'honneur, Mrs. Dallas, it takes a great deal of devotion to risk one's hair and whiskers to drive out here, on these dusty roads."

"I am aware of the difficulties you had to encounter. But as these ladies, in their lace bonnets and lawn dresses, have accomplished the feat, a knight of your renowned gallantry should not complain."

"Oh! ladies have a thousand charms wherewith to obliterate such disasters, but we poor, forlorn portion of humanity have no such resources. And where is your dandy brother, Miss Leeson? I expected to meet him here to-day."

"Robert will drive out later, with Mr. Lawrence."

"He is monstrously fond of Paris; in fact, who is not?" added the antiquated beau, glancing at his own artificial self in a mirror. "The lovers of the beautiful cannot live elsewhere."

"New York possesses almost as many advantages as Paris now," said Mrs. Dallas; "I was quite struck with the improvements during my last visit there."

"Oh! don't mention it, dear madam; no city can compete with this great capital for the thousand little indescribable enjoyments which tempt you at every step. One actually inhales pleasure."

"But you will admit, sir," said Laura, "that, as far as home happiness and comforts go, no country can better afford them than our own beloved native land."

"I admire those noble sentiments; but, having no family, America, to me, is uninteresting and unsatisfactory."

"Here is a lady who is, I fear, too much of your opinion," added Mrs. Dallas, as she left the room to receive Mr. and Mrs. Dobbins, who were alighting from their elegant equipage.

"Ah! Mrs. Dobbins, you have come just in time to lend me your powerful eloquence against these fair antagonists, who will not admit that Paris is the finest city in the world," said the old beau.

"Mr. Harris," interrupted the hostess, "allow me to remark that, as a quondam lawyer, you have entirely misunderstood our meaning. These ladies and I are profound

admirers of Paris, but merely claim for America what we believe to be her due."

"Oh! ladies are always right," answered the gentleman; "but I know you think as I do, Mrs. Dobbins."

"Of course; there is no place like Paris, where one can really enjoy life and be perfectly independent. I have been trying to prove this to Mr. Dobbins ever since our arrival."

"You have quite convinced me, my dear," said the husband. "Why, Robert, did you walk out here?" continued the kind fellow to young Leeson, who came in with Mr. Lawrence. "If I had only known it, I would have offered you a seat in our carriage."

"Don't feel at all concerned about us, my dear friend," answered the young man. "Frank suggested that we should take the cars to avoid the dust, and we did so."

"Why had I not that bright idea?" exclaimed Mr. Harris, striking his forehead, and brushing off the dust from his coat; after which he took a seat near Helen, and attempted to entertain the silent beauty, as he afterward styled her. But it was a difficult task to rouse that drooping spirit, and it took no less than the ridiculous pretensions of the would-be young gallant to elicit a smile from our heroine.

"By Jove! who is this fine lady?" he exclaimed, as he turned to the window, attracted by the sound of a carriage.

Helen's glance followed the same direction, and she started as she recognised Sir Archibald Courtnay and the smiling Cora, radiant with the consciousness of her newly-acquired title.

"Sir Archibald and Lady Courtnay," said the servant in livery, as he opened the door of the drawing-room.

Mrs. Dallas rose to receive her guests, who came in perfectly unprepared to meet so many of their New York friends. There was a slight diminution of pride and arrogance in their manner as they recognised their former acquaintances. Cora was too cunning not to avoid any thing approaching ridicule: she therefore met the assembled party in a gracious and unassuming manner.

Sir Archibald bowed to all, but a quiver of the lip was distinctly perceptible when he advanced toward Helen and shook hands with her. The young girl returned his greeting in a friendly manner, but could not control a slight tremulousness, as she replied to his inquiries about her health, etc. All this was not lost on Lady Courtnay, who, since her marriage, had had occasion to notice that, if she possessed Sir Archibald's title, he had never given her his heart. He had one, no doubt; where, then, was it? She now had solved the mystery. And why, then, had Helen rejected the young man?

While all these conjectures filled her mind, the lady of fashion—well skilled in the art of using language to conceal her thoughts—appeared entirely engrossed by the company, and was loquacious on the beauties of Paris and its environs.

Dinner was announced, and Mrs. Dallas, who was not possessed of a supernatural clairvoyance, requested Sir Archibald to sit near Miss Leeson.

Cora's first thought was to object to her husband being so very *near the door;* but reflecting that many present, who had known the secret of his former devotion to Helen, might discover her real motive, she took the seat which the hostess had assigned to her between Mr. Lawrence and Mr. Dallas, who, by-the-by, reached his home as the company were entering the dining-room. He was one of those

thorough business men who live in their counting-houses, and breathe but for the acquisition of wealth, much to the annoyance of his refined and amiable wife. Mr. Dallas, in other respects, was a kind, devoted husband; but he owed a portion of his time and society to the gentle being whom he had promised to love, protect, and *make happy*. These last words are not inserted in the marriage ceremony, nor are they always sufficiently understood; and many evils arise from the entire neglect in which some very respectable, no doubt, but very forgetful, husbands leave their wives. Excess! excess! Again we say, there lies the error!

In Paris, one is always sure of having a good dinner. The servants are generally excellent, and nothing ever occurs to disturb the usual course of the entertainment. This was the case at Mrs. Dallas's. There was none of the elegance and profusion displayed in Madame de Mornay's establishment, but every thing in good style; and to most of the guests the dinner was very agreeable.

Helen gradually recovered from the painful feeling which she had experienced at meeting the young nobleman, and she was glad of the opportunity of proving to him that her assurances of sincere friendship were not an empty compliment.

Miss Marsy found Mr. Dallas a most unceremonious and congenial neighbour. In fact, Aunt Seraph, who in New York would have shunned the contact of the fashionable party, now felt quite at her ease with them. They all spoke English; and that sounded so much more like home than the incomprehensible graciousness of her French acquaintances.

Laura really enjoyed the ridiculous airs of our friend Tom, who, quite elated by the prospect of an hour's con-

fab with the beautiful countess, displayed all his powers of elocution to captivate her. They were by far the gayest of the party; and twice Robert, who, perchance, sat opposite to his cousin, whispered to Dobbins, "How can she be amused by that old fool?"

"He is very droll," answered good friend Dob, as he cast an anxious glance at Frank Lawrence, who was carrying on a slight flirtation with Olivia.

As the party rose from table, Mrs. Dallas proposed a stroll in the park; and as each lady took the arm of the gentleman who sat near her, Sir Archibald very naturally offered his to Helen, much to her regret; for she had detected the uneasiness which Lady Courtnay's manner evinced.

"I cannot walk far, for I have a pain in my foot," said the young girl.

"Only a short distance," answered Mrs. Dallas. "The country is so sweet at this hour!"

And the party were soon engaged amid the winding walks of the surrounding grounds.

"What did you think of me, Miss Leeson, when you heard of my marriage?" whispered the nobleman, as he lingered behind the company.

"I have always thought very highly of you, Sir Archibald," she replied, attempting to walk faster.

"Oh, Helen, do not deprive me of this single moment of happiness—the only one I have had for many months! Oh! when I said you were my only love, alas! how true it was! And now I am miserable!"

"Sir Archibald," exclaimed the agitated girl, "speak not thus. Cora loves you, she is worthy of you, and many blessings may be yours."

"No, never! That woman has no heart: she values my

title, the rank I have placed her in; but she cares not for me."

"A virtuous wife will always become attached to her husband; and, though Cora may be carried away, just now, by the brilliancy of her social position, she is, I am sure, devoted to you," said Helen.

"No, no! you do not know her. Your pure mind cannot discover the workings of those ambitious hearts who trample on all sacred principles to reach their aim. Why, why did you refuse to be mine?" added the young man, as he pressed Helen's cold hand to his lips.

Distressed and much annoyed, she walked on as fast as possible, gently whispering—"Sir Archibald, for my sake, and for yours, this cannot be. Do let us join the rest of our party!"

"Yes, yes; but pray for me, Helen, that God may have mercy on me, and forgive my error in bartering my happiness for a bit of gold."

Fortunately for this ill-timed declaration on the part of the young Englishman, Laura—who had noticed the disappearance of her cousin, and conjectured that all might not be as it should in her tête-à-tête with her former suitor—had retraced her steps, with her ludicrous admirer, talking loud enough for Helen to have warning of their approach. And, when they met the agitated couple, the young countess exclaimed—

"Helen, I knew your foot would pain you too much for a long walk. I came back to return with you to the house."

How thankful the young girl felt for the judicious interference of her sensible cousin!

The four walked toward the little château, and when the jealous wife and the rest of the company entered the draw-

ing-room, Laura was, apparently, engaged in earnest conversation with the guilty Sir Archibald, while Helen seemed to take great interest in the marvellous account Mr. Harris gave of his adventures in Spain.

A short time afterward the carriages drove up, and all took leave of Mr. and Mrs. Dallas, with many expressions of gratitude for their kind reception.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THREE weeks had elapsed since the arrival of the travellers in Paris, and, notwithstanding the unpropitious season which they had selected for visiting the great capital, their time had been spent most agreeably. Laura's health had considerably improved; Miss Marsy's hopes were reviving. Robert, reckless about the cares which were racking his family at home, enjoyed the pleasures of Paris with all the buoyancy of youth and of his careless disposition. Helen was the only one in whom no change for the better was apparent. She felt great concern about the state of her father's health and business. The parting words of the unhappy man often returned with vivid bitterness to her memory, and her own silent, harrowing sorrow was wearing every fibre of that young heart. Our physical being is so closely connected with that immortal spirit which God's bountiful goodness has granted to the morsel of clay, that no pang affecting the one can be unfelt by the other; the sting which pierces the heart will soon do its work of destruction on the devoted body. Thus it was with Helen. The natural transparency of her complexion had gone, and a marble-like paleness had settled on those beautiful features, giving them, when at rest, the appearance of a statue. Aunt Seraph's affectionate solicitude was warm in its endeavours to ascertain the cause of the frightful change; and the kind friend in vain attempted by diversion and words of comfort to bring a smile upon the

loved countenance. Laura, aware of the cause of Helen's suffering, was ingenious in her efforts to procure relief, but not with much success. She was convinced that if Gustave de Mornay could possibly interest the young girl sufficiently to obliterate, even slightly, the memory of her short and mysterious attachment to Walter, a great point would be gained. But how could that be accomplished? Notwithstanding the evident admiration of the viscount, Helen had never appeared to notice it, and neither by word or look had she evinced the slightest vanity at the conquest. It is too soon, thought Laura; when we return from Italy, I will manage it. She could not have loved Walter under those extraordinary circumstances so passionately that all access to her sensitive heart could have been closed by his death. Oh! if she had known him and idolized him as I did my Arthur!

Strange as it may appear, Helen's devotion to the only dream of love which had dawned upon her young existence was as engrossing, as absorbing, as any earthly affection could possibly be. There is in every woman's bosom a sacred flame, which, when kindled for the first time by the heavenly spark, sends forth a ray of joy which beams gloriously upon the pure spirit; and that early impression is, perhaps, the most powerful, the most ineffaceable, which our versatile nature is susceptible of. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that, when deprived of that brilliant light, poor Helen's fate was clouded in darkness.

How true, that trouble never comes alone! We might murmur at the harshness of the decree, were not the same words applicable to the blessings of Providence. How essential, then, the practice of that holy virtue—patience—which won immortal glory for the afflicted Job, and which, long after, when the wisdom of God's chosen people had

decayed and disappeared beneath the cloud of evil example, the Divine preceptor came to teach his erring children. *He* bore with meekness the repeated blows of adversity, that we might learn the salutary lesson of resignation and submission to the ever-wise and merciful will.

"What is the matter, Robert?" exclaimed Miss Marsy, as the young man one morning entered her dressing-room, where she sat reading with Helen and Laura. He held an open letter, and his countenance expressed so much anguish, that Aunt Seraph was seriously alarmed.

"Oh! this steamer has brought us awful news!" he replied, as he threw himself on a chair, and buried his face in his hands.

Miss Marsy picked up the letter, which had fallen at her feet, and having hastily perused it, she said—"It is not as bad as I feared. We are all partially prepared for this. Helen," added the kind friend, with emotion, "this is from Herman, announcing your father's failure. He says they did all that could be done to avoid it, but in vain; and for the sake of keeping up appearances, matters have been made much worse. Unfortunately, Mr. Leeson's delicate health will scarcely enable him to bear the blow. He had been very ill, but was better when Herman wrote. This failure will, I fear, involve the whole of your father's property; but your mother's fortune is secure, I believe, and mine, you know, dear child, is hers and yours."

The unhappy girl rested her head on Aunt Seraph's bosom, and sobbed violently, while Laura, with words of love and comfort, tried to soothe her. Helen thought not an instant of herself in this dreadful calamity; but the image of her wretched father, her sainted mother, and poor little patient Anna, filled her mind with agonizing sorrow.

But her grief was like herself—silent and calm. Not so the violent despair which had taken possession of Robert.

The young man had always thought his fate beyond the reach of such reverses. The possibility of an appalling change in his father's position had never occurred to him; and although Herman Smith had frequently warned the wild boy against indulging in excesses which would unfit him for the sacred duties he might be called upon to fulfil later in life, Robert had laughed at the reproof, as, in days of yore, he had scorned the salutary advice of Aunt Seraph; and now, that the terrific reality burst upon his unprepared mind, the effect was crushing.

"We shall be beggars—disgraced—ruined! a laughing-stock for all New York! Oh! bitter, bitter fate!" exclaimed the young man, as he paced the room.

"Robert! Robert! be calm, and do not give up in this unmanly manner!" said Aunt Seraph, affectionately.

"Not give up when all is lost—when we are reduced to poverty! For who knows whether my mother's property is not gone with the rest in that gulf of extravagance in which father's pride has precipitated us all?"

"Oh, brother," exclaimed Helen, as she clasped the young man's arm, and compelled him to sit near her, "can *you*—who have so much to reproach yourself with, so much to answer for—can you blame our father's conduct? Whatever his errors may have been, we, his children, have no right to condemn his actions. A higher power will call us all to account when the solemn moment of retribution has come. Let us think of our own sins, and be merciful, that we may be judged in mercy. You are young, Robert—intelligent. Our country affords elements of success which all can grasp; the will alone is required. Pray, dear

brother, that Providence may grant you that efficient will, which, with his grace, accomplishes all things!"

"Oh! it is easy for you to talk thus, Elly!" said the young man, as the tears fell fast, and the stern violence of his passions was gradually giving way to a meeker sorrow. "Yes, it is easy; for you are good and pure. God loves you, and Laura, and Aunt Seraph, as his angels; but he spurns such sinners as I am—he drives them from him!"

"God is an indulgent father, my dear boy," said Miss Marsy—"a forgiving parent; he will look down in kindness on your trials, which may prove an inestimable blessing."

"Now, my children," said Laura, smiling, "I entirely disapprove of giving up to grief when so much is left to us. With friends, whose means are still considerable, there is little to fear as regards pecuniary troubles."

"Would it not be better for me to return to America, aunt?" said Robert; "I think it is my duty."

"We will talk that over," answered Miss Marsy. "In a few days we can make up our minds on the subject. Ah! here is my Arty; what have you there? A note for you, Elly?"

"Only a few lines from Blanche de Cerny," replied Helen, "reminding Laura and myself of the wish we expressed to visit the Crêche, or nursery for little children. She, it appears, superintends one of them, and, in fact, devotes all her time to charitable pursuits. But I cannot go out to-day; it is quite impossible."

"Why so?" said Laura. "I can understand that you should not be willing to visit or go to any public place; but on such a mission as this? It seems as though Providence had thrown this opportunity in our path, that, by seeing the sufferings of our fellow-beings, we should learn to be

thankful for his bounty to us, who are so much more favoured."

"Laura is right, darling," added Miss Marsy. "I advise you both to go; and Blanche de Cerny is so sweet, her society will divert you in a soothing and pleasant manner."

Helen felt the truth of these remarks, and accordingly prepared to accompany Laura and Mademoiselle de Cerny on their interesting visit.

Robert was less accessible to persuasion, and for several hours remained absorbed in sullen discontent.

However, finding that he was left alone to brood over his trouble, (Aunt Seraph having gone to the Tuilleries with little Arthur and his nurse,) and not being adequate to the difficult task of reasoning with his own rebellious self, the young man went out for a stroll on the Boulevards; and meeting with his friend Frank Lawrence, he allowed himself to be carried off to the Bois de Boulogne. There his thoughts were soon led into a channel far different from the gloomy one in which they had wandered in distracted agony but a few hours before.

The beneficial lesson of adversity was still unlearned!

As Laura had supposed, their visit to the nursery was most gratifying to their charitable feelings. So many little ones were thus provided with a safe harbour while deprived of maternal care, and so much order and cleanliness reigned in the establishment, that it was evident the eye of experience and judicious kindness was ever watchful over the infant tribe. After leaving the nursery, Mademoiselle de Cerny proposed to Helen and Laura that they should visit a young flower-maker in whom she took great interest, and whose history was a heart-rending one. She had lost both parents in the course of a few months, and,

being called upon to support six brothers and sisters, the heroic child, who was but twelve years old, had undertaken the arduous and almost impossible task, thanks to Miss Blanche's kind interference! Mademoiselle de Cerny had, in her leisure hours, acquired quite a proficiency in making artificial flowers, and she attempted to teach Pauline Berton that beautiful art, meanwhile spending all her small income to provide for the poor orphans. These details our ladies had heard from Madame de Mornay, and at the time had expressed a strong desire to see Pauline at her own establishment.

"Good-morning, chère enfant," said Mademoiselle de Cerny, as she entered the work-room with her American friends. "I have brought these ladies to see you; have you any thing pretty to show us, Pauline?"

"Oh, yes, mademoiselle—these variegated pinks, which you began for me."

It was astonishing to see with what intelligence and alacrity the little French girl moved about the store, superintending three or four apprentices who were a head taller than herself, but who submitted with docility to the superior knowledge of the juvenile mistress. Pauline had acquired wonderful skill in the manufacture of the exquisite imitations of Nature's gems; and through the protection of her kind instructress, and some of her friends, she found a ready sale for her work. There was a smile of happiness on that young face, which contrasted strangely with the two deep wrinkles which early cares had traced on her brow.

"Children well, Pauline?" inquired Blanche.

"Oh, very well, mademoiselle. Rosalie and Marie are at school, the two boys at work, and our baby is asleep. We are all very comfortable," added the little woman—for she could not be called a child.

Helen and Laura were so delighted with Pauline, that both purchased some of her flowers; and as they were leaving the work-room, Laura said—"This is for the baby; she must have a nice warm dress for this winter," and the countess handed a gold-piece to the young girl, who thanked her with a look of gratitude which expressed more than words could have done.

This episode, trifling as it was, served to divert Helen's mind from the painful subject which had sorely affected her sensitive heart.

Aunt Seraph was much pleased with the account her nieces gave of Pauline, and she concluded that it would be a great advantage to the courageous girl to furnish her with the means of going to New York, where she could carry on her trade in a manner so much more lucrative than in Paris.

While the ladies were still discussing the fate of the little flower-maker, Gustave de Mornay was announced. The young man was always a welcome visitor. He had been so kind and attentive, that he was considered no longer a stranger; and on many occasions, even of a trivial nature, his advice had been asked by the travellers.

"What? You do not really leave Paris in a week, Miss Marsy?" he exclaimed, when Aunt Seraph had communicated her plans to him.

"Yes; I arranged all these matters this morning at the Tuilleries, while I sat there alone. We will pass a few weeks in Switzerland, and can, I think, reach Naples about the middle of September. After spending a month there, we shall return to Paris, to remain a few days previous to sailing for America. Does this meet with your approbation, ladies?"

"With mine, certainly," said Laura, smiling at the young man's evident annoyance.

"Well, it does not exactly suit me, my dear Miss Marsy," said Gustave. "I came here this evening for the express purpose of prevailing upon you to leave this warm city, and devote a week to us at Valprés. Mother will be sadly disappointed."

"It would have given us great pleasure to make Madame de Mornay a visit," replied Aunt Seraph; "but I fear it is quite impracticable."

"Why so?" said Laura, who was struck with the possibility of thus accomplishing her favourite scheme for Helen's happiness. "We are not obliged to remain several weeks in Switzerland, and surely our time will be much more agreeably spent at Valprés."

"Bravo! fair lady!" exclaimed the young man; then turning to Helen, he added—"and will you not lend me your eloquence, Miss Leeson, to persuade your aunt?"

"I don't think either Laura or you require any auxiliary, Monsieur de Mornay."

"Now, aunt," continued the countess, "I think we may promise to pass a few days with this devoted friend of ours."

"Laura, indeed I—"

"Do not crush all my hopes, Miss Marsy," said the viscount, with an imploring look which was quite irresistible.

As usual, Aunt Seraph gave up, and it was agreed that the ladies should spend the last week of their stay in France at Valprés. This arrangement suited Laura for many reasons: besides her wish to create an interest in Helen's heart for the young nobleman, she was anxious to avoid her aunt's scrutiny regarding a likeness of herself for which she was sitting, and which was to be presented

to Miss Marsy on her return to America. Helen and Robert were in the secret, and had declared that it would be perfect.

Laura urged her cousin to have her likeness taken also, at her expense; but as the price was very extravagant, Helen positively refused, preferring to accept Aunt Seraph's offer to take singing-lessons from a good professor. "I may require that knowledge, one day," she thought.

CHAPTER XXIX.

It was with evident reluctance that Miss Marsy prepared to accompany her nieces to Valprés; but Laura easily convinced her of the necessity of making a sacrifice which might prove such a benefit to Helen's welfare; and Madame de Mornay had been so kind, that Aunt Seraph dared not even acknowledge to herself how entirely she was opposed to her niece's wishes.

Helen appeared indifferent on the subject, but at heart she regretted an arrangement which would thus place her so much in contact with the young nobleman, whose admiration she could not help noticing, and to whom she felt it was impossible to give the slightest encouragement. And, as the anxious girl knelt in prayer on the night previous to her leaving Paris, she begged the ever-wise Protector so to direct the events of her life, that she might avoid giving pain to one for whom she felt sincere respect —almost friendship.

Mysterious are the ways of Providence!

The next morning a large package of letters was brought in, and as Helen opened one from Anna, she exclaimed—

"Oh! father is dead!"

It is useless to describe the painful scene which followed; very similar to the one which had agitated our friends a few days before. But now the misfortune was immeasurably greater, and both Helen and Robert, notwithstanding

the warning they had had of the sad event, were deeply distressed.

As we take an interest in the pains and joys of our heroine, we will here transcribe Anna's letter to her sister. A few moments' communion with her pure spirit can but benefit the lovers of the good and holy. Thus wrote the young girl:

"MY OWN DEAR SISTER:

"God in his wisdom has thought fit to afflict us in a severe manner of late, and I trust our last letters have partially prepared you for the dreadful intelligence I am now compelled to communicate. Yes, darling, God has called the beloved parent to his paradise; but what a comfort it is to us, to think that several months of suffering had prepared him for the last hour! You know how opposed he was to all religious interference, as he called the words of consolation. Well, since that bitter trial which brought such a change in our fate, father had become an altered man—meek and resigned, patient and amiable; anxious to converse frequently with our kind pastor, and speaking of you all with so much affection! I cannot tell you how welcome that happy change was to mother and myself. Alas! and with what ardour we clung to the hope of keeping him with us in that blessed state! But Providence ordained otherwise, and when we least expected it, when his strength seemed to revive, the dreaded knell of separation had sounded, and we were summoned to resign the loved one.

"It was an agonizing moment—twelve o'clock at night. Mamma and Boget were sitting up with the patient, who had spent a quiet evening. I had retired at nine, very much fatigued, having read several hours to father. A gentle knock roused me immediately.

"'Come down, Miss Anna,' said Sophie, as I opened the door; 'your father is worse!'

"I hurried to the sick-room; and, as I entered, was struck with the awful change in that pale countenance. Mother knelt in prayer.

"'Matilda,' said father, so softly that we could scarcely hear his voice, 'farewell: Anna, Helen, Robert, Laura—all farewell! O Lord, forgive me!'

"He spoke no more; and, as I kissed his emaciated hand, its icy coldness made me shiver! Oh, Helen, death is a terrific messenger—one which strikes awe in every heart! Why, why are we not always prepared for its coming?

"Mother, who is, you know, so pious and submissive, has borne this blow with wonderful courage; but her physical strength is gone. She is in bed, under Dr. Clifford's care, and just now she called me to send you her love and blessing, adding, that you must not think of coming home until the fall. We shall move to Allbreeze next week, and probably rent this house, all furnished. Herman tells me that we may fare better than poor father expected. Alas! alas! three days ago the dear friend was carried to his last home, and we miss him so much! Mrs. Walker, Mrs. Irving, and Alice and Emma, have been so devoted! Aunt Grantly came very often, but we dreaded her visits; they always appeared to irritate the dear patient. I have seen a great deal of Mrs. Murray, who seemed to take such an interest in us all. She, too, has had trouble. She told me of the death of Mr. Grey, who was like a son to her. How sad this world is! Why can we not always think of the happy home the Saviour has prepared for us? Farewell, dear ones—kind Aunt Seraph, Laura, and my precious Arty. What a comfort the little one would be to us

just now! but I am quite satisfied that you should all be away from this atmosphere of gloom.

"Ever your devoted sister, ANNA."

This will appear an unusually profound epistle for a girl of fifteen; but let it be remembered that Anna's infirmity, in depriving her of the sports of her age, had opened to her inquiring mind treasures of knowledge, which had produced that remarkable cultivation in her education. For several years, Anna's studies had been, if any thing, rather more deep than Helen's; and, on some subjects, the younger sister possessed great superiority of acquirements.

Of course, after receiving this sad news, all idea of going to Valprés was given up by the travellers.

Laura wrote to Madame de Mornay, to announce her uncle's death, and their intention of leaving for Switzerland in a few days.

Gustave's mother came to Paris immediately to see her American friends, and offer her sincere sympathy, which was soothing to the afflicted ones, who felt so much alone in that great city. When engaged in pleasurable pursuits, we can dispense with the society of those we love; but when care is our guest, how essential those ties of affection become, and how grateful we feel for the word or look of comfort which friendship bestows!

Madame de Cerny and her daughters were also kind and attentive. Blanche assisted Laura in making the purchases for the mourning of the family; and the heartfelt endeavours and intellectual resources of both sisters greatly contributed to soothe the sorrow which all felt very keenly, but which seemed to have crushed Helen completely. Several times, since she had read that terrible announcement in the paper, she had buoyed herself with the hope that it was a false report; and, as Walter had corresponded regularly with

Mrs. Murray, she thought that some news of the young man might possibly be gleaned from his friends; but, from Anna's letter, it was evident that the old lady had given up all hope, and Helen's spirits drooped beneath the heavy burden of care which weighed upon her mind.

Madame de Mornay, in her last meeting with Laura, intimated her wishes regarding her son's marriage with Helen, requesting, however, that the subject should not be mentioned to her, as she felt how inappropriate the time was for such a communication.

Laura appreciated the motive, and assured Madame de Mornay of her sincere desire to contribute to the success of an event which would insure her cousin's happiness.

"When we return from Italy, dear madam," added the countess, "I hope this will all be settled. Of my cousin's consent I cannot be sure, as her feelings on the subject are unknown to me; but, methinks, it must be an easy task for your son to win any heart, particularly when esteem and regard have prepared the way for a more tender feeling."

Before closing this little confab, Laura had apprised Madame de Mornay of the change which had taken place in Helen's prospects. But this did not appear to influence her in the slightest manner. She reiterated her expressions of affection, adding, that her fortune being considerable, and Gustave her only child, his happiness was the main object of her wishes; and that, as he was attached to Helen, she saw but one impediment to the match, and that was an objection on the part of the young girl.

Miss Marsy parted with her Paris friends with more regret than she thought possible, considering her short

stay among them. One month, under ordinary circumstances, will do but little to ripen a mere acquaintance into friendship. But when daily intercourse and a considerable amount of obligation come in for a share of influence, we find a strong feeling of attachment has succeeded to the indifference which we felt toward those persons a short month ago. Love knows no time: swift as the shafts of the little god, it shoots through space; it wounds, it conquers; and among its subjects there is no account kept of those hours which silently glide away and lead on to eternity.

"How kind and polite in Gustave de Mornay!" said Laura, as she came into her cousin's room on the eve of their departure; "he has just told Robert that he would accompany us, to-morrow, as far as Basle. Having visited Germany several times, he will be a most useful and agreeable travelling companion."

"Laura," said Helen, looking up from a letter which she was writing to her mother, "I am truly sorry the viscount is going with us. You know it is wrong, unladylike, in me to give him the slightest encouragement."

"Why so, pray? Are you to spend all the days of your youth mourning over a dream, Helen?"

"Oh! would that it had been one! Would that those words of bitter and deserved reproof had never struck my ear!"

"Well, dearest, I have felt for you—I have sympathized in all your sorrow; but this cannot last. You owe yourself to your mother; and would it not give her infinite satisfaction to see you well married, even if compelled to be separated from you for some time? Far better would such a fate be than that which your present morbid state craves, my own dear sister!"

"Let us drop that subject now, darling; I am unfit for contention, even with your sweet self."

Laura, being an excellent diplomatist, thought proper not to insist, and trusted to chance and the young nobleman's powers of fascination to bring forth a result which she so sincerely desired.

CHAPTER XXX.

Our travellers were deep in their preparations for their journey. They were to take the cars for Strasbourg, where they expected to arrive that night.

Monsieur de Mornay was at the hotel in time to join the party at breakfast, and proved most efficient in arranging various matters conducible to the comfort of all, which Robert's inexperience or carelessness would certainly not have suggested. Aunt Seraph, as usual, scrupulously careful to avoid all intrusion upon her neighbours, was bountiful of her apologies to the young man, who assured her that it gave him great pleasure to take this little trip with so congenial a party; that he made it a point to visit a portion of Switzerland every summer, previous to going to the Pyrenees with his mother, in August. He would remain with them three days, and return to Paris in time to be at Madame de Mornay's orders to accompany her to Pau.

This being settled, and Aunt Seraph's hesitations at rest, they proceeded to the embarcadère of the Strasbourg railroad. By-the-by, this is one of the noblest edifices which art and industry have erected to the glory of that great modern improvement. The French were slow in following the examples of their more active neighbours beyond the dividing channel, and of their still more enterprising fellow-men on this side of the great ocean; but few can compete with their present works, and nowhere are the

constructions appertaining to railroads erected with more magnificence and solidity than in la belle France. This remark was made by our party as they entered the comfortable cars.

The day passed away as pleasantly as circumstances would allow. All had a thorn which pierced the heart too deeply to admit of that buoyant mirth which had rendered their trip to Valprés so agreeable. Need we follow them, and detail, hour by hour, their impressions of the fine scenery which astonished and delighted their vision during their journey from Strasbourg to Basle? The picturesque beauties of the Rhine have been described so often, and so many of our readers have enjoyed their varied charms, that it would be useless here to detain them with an imperfect pencilling of the mysterious stream which rolls its waters from the icy regions of snow-clad glaciers, through the verdant gardens of Germany, till it pours them into the roaring billows of the North Sea. There are volumes of romance attached to the borders of the Rhine; and, to the poetical fancy, no spot in Europe is so pregnant with innate beauty, and reminiscences of antique legends. Each towering cliff claims an echo of long-hushed sounds; each desolate castle speaks a tale of mystery and love; and even in the modest habitation of the valley there is a breath of poetry, which has brought forth many a page of flowing eloquence.

Gustave de Mornay, who had visited all those enchanting spots repeatedly, proved an excellent cicerone; and the three days which he had devoted to his American friends passed by too swiftly for all except Helen.

The young girl had suffered much from the consciousness of the increasing attachment of the viscount.

"Shall I be ever doomed to repulse those who love me?"

she muttered, as she retired on the third evening of their journey. "Oh, Walter, how bitterly have I atoned for my cruel conduct to you! But," added Helen, as she sat gazing upon the admirable vistas around, while the moon shone upon her sad countenance, "Gustave de Mornay only fancies me. He is carried away by new impressions, and has not noticed the heart which has been his many a long day. Yes, Blanche is attached to Gustave; I saw it; and he likes her, and will love her. Poor little violet! How reluctant I should be to crush it, even if all my hopes were not deep in the grave!"

With keen feminine instinct, Helen had detected Mademoiselle de Cerny's attachment for the young nobleman; and great was her admiration for the devoted girl, when she perceived that not one feeling of bitterness tinged her intercourse with her apparent rival. No! It was only in one or two uncontrollable expressions of interest, that the tie which bound the simple girl to one far above her in rank and wealth had betrayed itself.

"Yes, yes; he cannot help loving Blanche," said Helen, as she closed the window and retired for the night, satisfied with having thus compromised with her conscience, which reproached her somewhat regarding her distant and repulsive manner toward the kind young man.

Before leaving his friends, Monsieur de Mornay had advised them to take a travelling carriage at Basle, and drive to Berne. This arrangement was welcomed by all, as it promised the comforts of independence, and a full enjoyment of the magnificent scenery.

Accordingly, the next morning, after breakfast, our party entered the carriage which Gustave had procured for them, and were soon, thanks to four good horses and a well-paid

postillion, some distance on the road to Berne. The weather was very fine; and all being restored to that delightful home-feeling which private conveyances afford, were in better spirits than of late, and indulged in a long chat about America and the kind friends in Paris, interrupted here and there by an exclamation of admiration from Laura or Helen, as they glanced at the gigantic splendour of Alpine nature. All these trifling emotions prepared the travellers for an excellent repast, which had been ordered for them on the preceding evening, again by Gustave, and which, in their present state of locomotion, was greatly appreciated.

The day was drawing to a close, and the prospect of reaching Berne late that night was discussed by the ladies with a slight feeling of awe, as the setting sun caused the shadows of the mountains to grow taller and taller, until they spread their gloomy shroud on the surrounding landscape.

Robert and the courier laughed at their fear, and the former had fallen into a sound sleep, when a sudden crash roused the whole party, and elicited a scream, which was re-echoed through the mountains.

"It is nothing at all," said the courier, as he jumped off the box; "but the axletree is broken, and we cannot go on. You must get out quietly, or the carriage will tip over."

This was said in that easy, unconcerned manner with which experienced travellers generally view slight accidents; but it was far from reassuring to the terrified travellers.

"What is to be done?" asked Robert.

"Why, sir," suggested the postillion, "there is a small village about a mile from here; I will go there on horse-

back and find some conveyance for you; but you will be obliged to sleep there, as we could not possibly reach Berne before to-morrow morning."

"Well, well, that will do. Go immediately," said Robert, while the ladies, having somewhat recovered from their fright, determined to make the best of their accident. The moon was just rising over the white cliffs of the mountains, and its rays spread a brilliancy on the scenery around which was strikingly beautiful. The weather was so mild, that they had little to fear from the effects of the night air; and Laura, who had a particular fancy for what she styled the freaks of fate, walked up and down the road in fine spirits, threatening Aunt Seraph, who was very much alarmed, with the sudden apparition of some terrific brigand, who would carry her off to his rural domains among yon rugged peaks.

In less than an hour the postillion returned, followed by a sort of a country-wagon, drawn by one horse, and driven by a sturdy-looking Swiss peasant.

"This is all we could procure," said the postillion, humbly doffing his cap to the ladies. "This good man keeps the inn at Reinsbach; it is a pretty place, and the accommodations are quite good."

"Charming!" said Laura, delighted with the little episode, which thus afforded her an opportunity of seeing many picturesque beauties they might have passed unnoticed.

The party entered the wagon, leaving the courier and postillion to raise the carriage, so as to convey it to the village, where it could be repaired.

The drive was a short one; and it was with infinite satisfaction that our friends stopped at the inn, where, as the host had assured them, they found a share of

comfort quite sufficient to satisfy the wants of wearied travellers.

A good supper and neat bed-rooms were considered great luxuries amid the wilds of the mountains; and all retired, after having expressed their admiration of the little Swiss hostess—her order and cleanliness.

Laura and Helen occupied the same room; and, as they rose the next morning, Laura exclaimed—

"Oh, do look at this view! It is an earthly paradise. I should not have missed seeing this for a great deal!"

Reinsbach was indeed a lovely spot—one of the many gems which conceal their charms in the valleys of Switzerland. It was situated on a small lake, surrounded by a landscape so grand, so wild, that one might have fancied it had stood thus since the Creator bid that all things should be. Here and there only a few acres of cultivated ground showed that man claims his rights from the furthest recesses of Nature's store.

There was some life and animation about the village; and Laura ascertained from the young girl who waited upon her, that many persons came to Reinsbach, attracted by the salubriousness of the mountain air. "And some English families have spent several months here in these cottages," she added.

"We cannot leave this place until this afternoon," said Laura; "I must see more of it. Robert," continued the countess as they met in the dining-room, "we would like to take a walk around this sweet lake."

"I have no objection, but cannot accompany you, as I find the carriage must be taken to a town some five miles off, to be repaired. I am going there this morning with mine host to see what conveyance can be procured to reach Berne before to-night."

"Very well; we will take one of the servants about here. Helen and I are not afraid of any thing. Will you join us, Aunt Seraph?"

"No, dear; I slept badly, and am not equal to the task. I will stay with Arty. But do not go too far, girls; I shall be worried to death."

Robert insisted upon leaving the courier to accompany his sister and cousin, and started with the inn-keeper on his unsatisfactory business.

Enchanted with the prospect of a stroll in that wild country, Laura sallied forth with Helen. They walked some distance by a bright sunshine, enjoying the exhilarating exercise, and inhaling the perfumes of the aromatic shrubbery.

"Oh! here is a boat, Helen!" said the countess; "suppose we get this man to row us to the other side. It must be delightful to glide over this silvery sheet of water."

"I am willing; but look, Laura, at that dark cloud coming over those white peaks; we might have rain before we reach the inn."

"Oh! no, Dame Prudence; you are a real full-stop to one's fancies. Now, I am bent upon a row across this lake; it cannot possibly do us any harm. Pierre," added the countess, addressing the courier in French, "ask that man if he will take us over in his boat."

The man obeyed, and having received a favourable answer, he assisted both ladies into the bateau, and quietly took his seat at the other end of the little craft.

"Is this not sweet?" exclaimed Laura, as the young peasant sang his wild mountain song, beating time with his oars, and shooting over the smooth waters as swiftly as a bird The lake was very broad, and the ramblers had scarcely reached half-way across it, when, as Helen had

prophesied, the dark clouds came sailing toward them, large drops of rain began to fall, and in a few moments a heavy shower streamed over them, rendering parasols and blanket shawls very inefficient protections.

"Tell him to row us to the nearest house for shelter, Pierre," said Helen, who feared her cousin might take cold.

In a short time they had cleared the distance which separated them from the shore, and both cousins, leaping out of the boat, ran up a little slope which led to a cottage, evidently inhabited by persons of some wealth. Helen knocked, and the door was immediately opened by an old man-servant, who, without waiting to make any question, ushered the two ladies into a small drawing-room.

"We have been overtaken by the rain," said the countess in French; "will you allow us to remain here until it is over?"

"Of course," answered the servant, as he proceeded to light the fire, which seemed to be prepared for a like emergency. "And will you not take something, ladies?" he added, in English. "A glass of wine? you must be cold. I have orders from my mistress, Lady Falkland, who is now in Geneva, to receive all travellers who are overtaken by our mountain storms, and treat them with due hospitality," continued the old man, as he removed the wet shawls, and soon returned with a waiter on which were wine and a plate of biscuits; after which he left the cousins to themselves.

"I am completely chilled," said Laura, as she sat near the blazing fire. "How delightfully this feels! Now, as long as we are alone in this cozy domain, we might as well make ourselves at home; we shall have to remain here an hour or two. How the wind blows, and how ter-

rific the outbursts of Nature's violence appear among these wild regions!"

"Come, darling," interrupted Helen, who felt some anxiety about Laura's delicate health; "let me settle you down on this lounge, near the fire; perhaps you can sleep a little while; that will restore you sooner than any thing else. And here is a dry blanket shawl, which, doubtless, her ladyship left for the use of crazy ramblers like our selves."

Laura, who felt tired and exhausted, made no resistance, and she had scarcely been wrapped up by Helen before she fell asleep.

For some time the young girl watched the pale countenance and listened to the short breathing, but, finding that her cousin was really at rest, she glanced around the little parlour in which they had found such a timely and comfortable welcome. It was furnished in maroon velvet, not with a great deal of luxury, but the furniture had evidently been selected by one accustomed to ease and elegance. Helen rose and walked into the adjoining room, which seemed a sort of gallery, devoted principally to works of art. Several handsome paintings hung on the dark walls, and one or two pieces of statuary indicated the taste of an artist.

As she was gazing on a fine Madonna and child which filled the panel between the windows, the wind blew so violently that a door at the extremity of the gallery was partially forced open, and Helen could see that it led into an apartment evidently illuminated. She hesitated; but, supposing this to be a chapel, and feeling an irresistible desire to kneel and pour out the sufferings of her soul in the presence of her heavenly Father, she gently opened the door, and found herself in a retreat dedicated to a

worship far different from what she had expected, and which filled her mind with doubt and fear.

It was a small room, about ten feet square, entirely hung in folds of crimson velvet, and containing no furniture but a couch of the same material, the cushions of which appeared to have been used very lately. From the ceiling hung a large gilt lamp, whose rays spread a bright light in the little sanctuary. But what attracted Helen's attention, and riveted her gaze in a painful manner, was a pedestal of marble, beautifully wrought, which stood in the middle of this mysterious retreat, and upon which lay a wreath of golden grapes.

"Oh! where am I, and what does this mean?" exclaimed the agitated girl, as she leaned on the couch for support; and clasping her hands on her throbbing temples, she added—"I know that wreath: it was mine; when—when—"

Before the words had escaped her lips, a footstep in the adjoining room arrested her attention; the door was thrown open, and Walter Grey stood before her.

One single shriek was heard, and she fell back senseless.

"O Lord!" muttered the young man, for he it was, "how mysterious are thy decrees! Have I not suffered long enough?" and he knelt before the fainting girl, using all possible means of restoring her to life. Full twenty minutes elapsed before Helen evinced any signs of returning consciousness. How long they appeared to the sufferer who watched the colourless features with intense agony!

At last a convulsive tremour ran through the hand he held in his, a slight quiver of the lip was perceptible, a delicate roseate hue tinged the pale cheek, and indicated that life had not vanished; the heavy eyelids rose gra-

dually, but there was no power of utterance to express the overflowing of that broken heart.

"Helen," he said, as he dropped her hand, and sat on the couch near her, "do we meet again in hatred? Have you forgiven me?"

"Oh, Walter!" at last burst from the lips of the exhausted girl; and as the tears fell fast, she buried her face in her hands.

"Why this grief?" he added. "Oh, I had thought that we would both have been spared this bitter trial! I struggled long against that affection which was the very breath of my life; and, for many days, the agony was intense; but now I am calm—the sacrifice is made! Yes," he continued, "all things are indifferent to me at present; my only wish is to live and die here alone. I care for no one!"

"Then—then!" she exclaimed, "you do not love me?" and suddenly placing her hand on his lips, she added, with an indescribable expression of despair, "Oh, for mercy's sake, don't say so! You would kill me!"

"What can you mean, Helen? Am I dreaming? Am I deranged?"

"No, no! See, Walter, see; and do not say you hate me!" she added, as she drew from her bosom the likeness which had betrayed her secret to Laura.

He took the locket, looked at it for an instant, and then, folding her passionately to his heart, he exclaimed—

"My wife! my own!"

"Yes, yours—yours forever!" she muttered; and, for a few moments, both were lost in the joy which acute suffering had rendered so pure, so intense!

"Walter," whispered the happy girl, gently disengaging herself from his embrace, "I thought I should have died just now, when you said you did not love me."

"Not love you, my precious—my only treasure? Did I say so? I was distracted! But, tell me, to what good genius, to what angelic interference, do I owe the blessed change which has opened the gates of paradise to my withered heart?"

Helen related, with a blushing cheek, every detail of her mysterious attachment—the long struggle, the extraordinary manner in which the true state of her feelings had burst upon her bewildered mind; and then she added, "But whence arose that terrible report?"

"It was the announcement of my poor father's death that you saw. He was travelling in the State of New York, and being at a small town called Rome, was accidentally run over by a stage and killed. I received this sad intelligence from my uncle, and the same steamer brought me the paper containing the strange announcement. I saw immediately that it might be mistaken for myself, as I was in Italy at the time, and had written from Rome to Mrs. Murray and George. Accordingly, my mind was made up at once. I knew that this news would reach you, and thus break the spell which bound you to my miserable fate. I determined to seek some retired spot, where I could live secluded from the world, and give up all ties with America. The sacrifice was great, but not half what I was capable of enduring for your sake. At Florence, I met Lady Falkland, an agreeable person. She spoke of a cottage which she owned in this retired spot, and consented to lease it to me for a year, as she intended travelling in the East. I was so delighted with this picturesque country, that I determined to purchase this house, which I succeeded in doing six weeks ago. I then proceeded to furnish it to suit my misanthropic tastes—to surround myself with every thing which could soothe my

blighted spirit; and this spot I devoted to the worship of a souvenir—the only link which bound me to you, Helen."

"Oh!" she whispered, "can I ever, ever repay you for all the suffering I have caused?"

"Tell me that the past is forgotten, and that you are mine. These words from your lips will obliterate all. But," he added, gazing with intense tenderness upon her uplifted countenance, "how pale—how thin you are, my own!—so changed! In my joy, I had not noticed it."

"I have had so much trouble, Walter!"

"Yes, I see grief has spread its gloomy vail over your young heart. I cannot bear to see these robes of death on you, dearest. Who are you wearing them for? Not your mother, I trust."

"No; my poor father. Oh! do not curse his memory! Before I parted from him, he partially acknowledged his guilt, and bid me, unconscious of the link which fate had woven, tell you that he craved your forgiveness; and thus do I kneel to you, in the name of the departed penitent."

"You, Helen, at my feet? Never! never!" and once more he clasped the lovely girl to his bosom. "Talk not of those melancholy events, darling," he continued; "our parents erred in a terrific manner, and both were doomed to leave this sad world without the knowledge of the bright joy which now dawns upon their children."

"Walter, explain to me how you succeeded in deceiving your uncle upon that false report? He must have heard of your father's accident."

"I don't know; but as I never wrote him since then, he may have supposed that a strange coincidence had caused my death in Italy about the same time that father's

occurred in the State of New York; and, as previous to leaving America, I had settled my business, so as to invest a considerable amount in England, I was not obliged to apply to uncle. You see, Providence had wisely ordained all things, in thus furnishing me the means of expiating my errors."

"Yes, and God directed my steps to you, that I might atone for my cruelty. But in my joy Laura has been forgotten; she is here asleep in the parlour."

"I saw the countess as I came in. My faithful Roger, the same who was my accomplice in that terrible tragedy last year, apprized me of your being here, as I returned from one of my rambles in the mountains. My first impulse was to avoid seeing you; and supposing you to be in the parlour, I went into the adjoining gallery. From there I saw the countess asleep, but alone; then I thought you must be here. Oh! words cannot express my feelings when I entered this retreat, where my fate was once more to be decided! But now I am so happy! The sensation is strange and new, and I feel that, were I deprived of your presence, it would be death indeed!"

"That need not be, thank Heaven. But let us go to Laura now, Walter. I am afraid I have left her too long alone."

"Has the countess heard our strange history?" asked the young man, as he rose and drew Helen's arm in his.

"Yes, yes; she knows all, and she pleaded your cause with sisterly eloquence until all hopes were lost."

Both proceeded to the drawing-room; Laura was still asleep, but as they advanced toward the couch, the rustling of Helen's dress awoke her. She opened her eyes, looked at the happy couple, and starting up, she exclaimed—

"Walter Grey!"

"Myself, dear lady," he said, as he clasped her extended hand.

"Oh! this is joy indeed! Helen, my own sister, how delighted I am! But," she added, smiling, "are you quite sure it is he—not a ghost?"

"If this is a being of that mysterious nature, then pray write my epitaph, dearest," said Helen.

"Now, Mr. Grey," continued the young countess, "answer for yourself, and let me know all about that strange intelligence which has reduced this fair lady to a mere shadow, and dear Mrs. Murray to despair."

Walter proceeded to relate the story he had told Helen.

"What! already three o'clock!" exclaimed Laura; "aunt will be very much alarmed about us. Is it safe for us to row over to the inn, now?"

"Quite so; but I will order my wagon and drive you around the lake; it will take but a few minutes more, and is much pleasanter after such a storm."

"See how calm nature is now!" said Helen, turning to the window as Walter left the room. "How beautiful and serene it looks after that violent convulsion!"

"Is it not the image of your own heart?" replied the young countess; "and has not his presence brought in your fate a change as bright, as pure as that which robes this mountain scenery? Oh! now I am satisfied, and it will be one pang less to bear when the time comes!"

"Laura, I cannot be happy without you; it breaks my joy to hear you talk thus."

"He will be all in all to you, my darling. I have known that blessing, and I cannot live deprived of it," added the countess, with a depression which, of late, she had not indulged in.

"The carriage is at your orders, ladies," said Walter,

as he returned to the drawing-room. "Roger had wisely surmised that it would be safer for you to drive over to the inn; adding," said the young man, with a smile which made Helen blush, "'I suppose your wife, Mr. Walter, does not remain here!'"

"Not quite yet," replied Laura laughing. "Now, my children, (for I claim you both as your senior in wisdom,) how shall we explain all this to aunt and Robert, and how will you account for your long silence to your American friends, Mr. Grey—Walter, I mean, for I am your sister from this very moment."

"I have scarcely had time to collect my thoughts on the subject, dear lady. Of course it is best that no one should know the strange circumstances connected with our marriage. The ceremony will be performed once more when we return to New York, and till then I must be but an humble suitor for this fair lady."

"Very well; then what must we say about that report?"

"The truth, to a certain extent. That is, that it was the announcement of my father's death; and that having travelled for several weeks through Turkey and Greece after that event, my letters to America (which I never wrote) had miscarried. I will write by this steamer to Mrs. Murray and my uncle, as though my correspondence had been regularly kept up. After all, only two months have elapsed; and, although improbable, my story is not an impossible one."

"You are, I see, an excellent contriver," said Laura. "Now, let us go; and as I have a certain curiosity to visit this romantic dwelling, to-morrow, when Robert has heard of your being here, you will invite us, in a very polite manner, to drive over to see your paintings. Only, let me

warn you not to forget that you have been just introduced to Miss Leeson, and are merely an admirer."

"I am, most undoubtedly," he said, pressing the little hand which was laid in his, as the lovers followed Laura to the carriage.

The drive was short, but most agreeable to the party. They reached the inn in about an hour, and found Aunt Seraph in great alarm. The old friend was so delighted to see her children safe, that she scarcely noticed Walter. In fact, she was totally ignorant of the great interest her nieces took in the young man, who, after spending a few moments with the ladies, returned to his home, promising to see them that evening, as they had determined not to leave for Berne until the following morning.



CHAPTER XXXI.

We have said that Laura was a capital diplomatist. She was, indeed; and her intelligent affection was now put into requisition to diminish many of the minor difficulties which circumstances threw across the mysterious fate of Helen and her husband.

It is hard, she thought, that when so much suffering has been their share, they should, now that Providence has allowed this blessed reunion, be deprived of that intercourse which they are so well entitled to. And still, for Helen's sake, it is essential that appearances should be regarded, and several weeks must elapse before Walter can pay his addresses to her, and their engagement be acknowledged. I will manage it. With this end in view, Laura whispered to Helen, as they saw Robert return from his expedition—"Don't speak of Walter; you would betray yourself. I will tell him my version of the story." Therefore, after questioning the young man about their chances for the morrow, and partially relating the occurrences of the morning, she added—

"And who should be spending a few weeks in this neighbourhood but your supposed-to-be-lost friend Mr. Grey, Robert."

"Walter?" exclaimed the young man.

"Yes. You know he is an eccentric, misanthropic sort of a fellow. Well, it appears he met a charming English woman in Italy—a Lady Falkland—who, finding that he

was quite an artist, offered him to spend a few weeks at her cottage here on the lake, and we happened to stop there for shelter in the storm. Was it not strange?"

"Very! But how happy I shall be to see the dear fellow! Aunt Seraph, you don't know him; he is one of my best friends, and so handsome and gentlemanly."

"Well," said Miss Marsy, "he did not strike me as being half as pleasing as Monsieur de Mornay."

"Quite a different style," said Laura, who could scarcely refrain from smiling. "But then, he is a genuine American; and you know, aunt, that is worth the finest title and all the wealth in the world."

"I suppose it is," replied the old lady, quite astonished to hear Laura even slightly depreciate the viscount; "but Gustave is a great favourite of mine."

"Did Walter say he would return to see us before we leave?" asked Robert.

"Yes; this evening."

"Now, Helen," continued the young man, "I hope you will learn to value him; I must try to induce him to accompany us as far as Interlachen. But he is such a bear! I don't believe he will trust himself with so many ladies."

"We will tame him," said Laura. "There is only one danger that I see, and that is, that we shall all like him too well, if he is what Mrs. Murray describes him to be."

"What is the matter with Laura?" thought Aunt Seraph; "this young man has bewitched her; but Helen's silence speaks in favour of Gustave de Mornay."

As we may perceive, Miss Seraphina had but little knowledge of the human heart, or she might have known that in love matters silence implies interest.

At seven o'clock, as the travellers rose from the supper-



table, Walter made his appearance. Robert's greeting of his friend was such as a warm heart and a deep sense of gratitude would prompt, and this affectionate welcome at once placed the young man somewhat on an intimate footing with the party. Aunt Seraph was the last to admit the stranger to the *sanctum sanctorum* of her favour. In fact, Laura had so wound around the old lady's heart in favour of the viscount, that she had constructed a brilliant palace in the air, of which her niece was to be queen; and she considered their new acquaintance as an intruder upon her dreams—one who might shake the very foundation of her ethereal edifice.

Little Arty, whom we have scarcely mentioned of late, but who exercised an undisturbed sway over all, ran in after the evening meal to get a last kiss from his little mamma, as he styled Laura. The noble boy, who had grown taller and stronger since the days of his capers with friend Dob on the broad Atlantic, ran to his mother, and then turned suddenly toward Walter, exclaiming—

"The gentleman in your picture, Cousin Robert."

"Yes; I have a daguerreotype of you, Walter, which this fellow has played with in my room many a time. You have an excellent memory, you young rogue."

"Elly don't like the gentleman in the picture," added the child; "do you, Elly?"

"Will Arthur love me, then?" said the young man, noticing the deep blush on Helen's cheek, and drawing the boy toward him.

"Yes, Arty loved you in the picture; it was pretty; mamma said it was, but—"

"But my pet must go to bed now," said Laura, dreading the untutored frankness of her son. "Now, kiss Mr. Grey, and say good-night."

"Good-night, all!" he exclaimed, as he threw his arms around Nina's neck.

The evening was spent very quietly: many home topics were discussed by those whom they interested so keenly; and at nine Walter took leave of the ladies, having, according to Laura's suggestion, invited them to visit Lady Falkland's cottage on the following day, and partially promised Robert to meet their party at Interlachen.

Again we might say with the poet—"A change came o'er the spirit of my dream."

How sweet, how pure, were the young girl's feelings as she laid her head on her pillow that night, and recalled to her mind every occurrence of that eventful morning! How new the sensation, the thrill of delight which had run through every vein as she met the beloved one, as she felt the passionate gaze beaming upon her! Oh! love in its purity is a spark of heavenly origin; it springs from the Creator, and returns unsullied to the throne of divine grace. Thus thought Helen, as she closed her eyes, wearied and exhausted; yes, exhausted, for joy in its outbursts is as wearing to the life-springs of our being as an emotion of a darker nature.

And when the light of the dawning day streamed upon the sleeping girl, the cherished name burst from her lips, and she awoke to the morning of her happiness!

Miss Marsy having again declined accompanying her nieces, Laura, Helen, and Robert drove over to Lady Falkland's cottage, and were welcomed at the door by the host himself.

"Why, you extravagant fellow!" said young Leeson, as he walked through the beautiful little residence. "No wonder you forgot your American friends in this sweet spot. One would willingly become a hermit in such a re-

treat. However," he added, "fair countess, I would prefer sharing it with you."

"Thank you, my noble lord; I have no fancy for such retired nooks as these, exquisite as they may be. It takes a supernatural amount of wit to play the agreeable in a permanent tête-à-tête. I boast no such powers."

"Now, Laura," whispered the young man, as she took his arm and led him into the picture-gallery, thus affording the lovers a moment of solitude, "let me tell you one or two pretty things, dear cousin."

"Say what you please; but don't expect a very gracious answer, for I am bent upon looking at these fine paintings."

"Did Arthur tell the truth, Helen, last evening?" whispered the young man, as he led her to the window, where the curtain entirely concealed them.

"I will not answer that question; you know me now as well as I know myself; perhaps better."

"Better?"

"Yes; because you are wiser than I am, and because I live and breathe through that mysterious feeling which binds me to you, Walter. Oh, how indescribable it is! I have wondered since yesterday, that I could have existed without it."

And, almost ashamed of what she had said, she hid her face in her hands.

"Dearest, precious one!" muttered the young man.

"This being obliged to appear as a stranger to you is terribly painful," continued Helen; "and we part so soon."

"Yes; but for a very short time. I will meet you at Interlachen in a few days; and then I return here to sell this house and join you at Naples. After which, I trust, we shall not be separated."

"God grant it may be so!" she replied.

And both walked into the gallery, where Laura had so effectually entertained her cousin, that he had not noticed the absence of his sister. No one, of course, was admitted that day to the sanctuary of the golden wreath.

The travellers returned to the village; and the carriage having been repaired, the party started for Berne in the afternoon. Walter remained with them until the last moment, and then wended his solitary way toward the cottage, a thousand times more desolate since the bright ray which had dawned upon it had vanished.

"She is gone, Roger," he said to his faithful servant, who opened the door for him.

"Yes, Master Walter; but we will go to her soon, for she is your own wife."

"But no one knows that, my old friend; and I cannot claim her now."

"Well, well; no matter. It will all come right," and the old man proceeded to prepare every thing for his master's comfort, while Walter retired to the little retreat, to dream of Helen and gaze upon that wreath which she had worn, and which so long had been his only joy.

Poor lovers! how bitterly you have been ridiculed! And still, wretched is the heart which cannot gather from memory's treasures some episode of bygone days, when it dwelt with delight upon a token of love—so precious, so valued then, and now divested by time and distance of all its enchantment!

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE travellers only remained two days at Berne. The city, although interesting in some respects, does not possess sufficient attractions to ween the tourists from the picturesque beauties of the landscape which at every step charm the eye in Switzerland. Accordingly, on the third day, they started, with pleasurable anticipations, for the valley of the Aar, visited the Lakes of Thun and Brienz, and reached Interlachen a few days afterward, enchanted with the romantic scenery of the beautiful valley through which the silvery stream rolls its waters, and upon which the snow-clad peaks of the Alps look down in majestic grandeur, like the gigantic spirits of some unknown regions.

It was with infinite happiness that Helen arose on the morning after their arrival. There she would see Walter again; and, unsatisfactory as was her intercourse with the young man in the presence of Aunt Seraph and Robert, it was still an inestimable blessing to see him, and now and then hear a word of affection from his lips. But Helen's joy, like most of the imperfect felicities of this deceptive world, was not without alloy.

Since that terrible shower to which Laura had been exposed, the young countess had had a violent cough, which seemed to wear her frail being and destroy all the benefit which she had derived from her sea-voyage and stay in France. Kind and unselfish as she always was, Laura

endeavoured to shake off as much as possible the painful exhaustion which was perceptible to all, and which filled her aunt with bitter anxiety.

This unfortunate change spread a gloom over the whole party, for Laura was the active genius, the promoter of all pleasure.

Robert, for the first time in his life, seemed to feel that sorrow was about to crush his hopes; and he clung with desperate devotion to the gentle being who, from childhood, had been the star of his life.

Miss Marsy was most anxious to consult a physician for her niece, but to whom could she apply in this strange country? There could be no scientific men in such a small place as Interlachen. She therefore urged their not remaining in that lovely spot, where travellers generally linger to admire the wonderful freaks of nature.

That afternoon Walter arrived, and relieved Aunt Seraph of a great weight of care by informing her that a friend of his, a celebrated French physician, had travelled with him, and that he knew him to be a most intelligent and agreeable man.

Miss Marsy was partially reassured by the opinion Dr. Darmont expressed of her niece's health; but Walter informed Robert that the physician considered the young countess in a very precarious state, and that the climate of Switzerland was by no means the proper one to promote her recovery.

"Then we must not stay here a day longer!" exclaimed the passionate young man. "Oh, Walter!" he added, "I love Laura so dearly, it will kill me if she is taken from us! Do you think her so very ill?"

"Indeed, I cannot tell; but Dr. Darmont's opinion is, I fear, a correct one. However, he seems to think the mild



atmosphere of Italy may benefit your cousin's health considerably."

"How shall I tell Helen? No one can manage it but her. I will take aunt and Laura out to drive, in a few moments; Helen is in my parlour, drawing a view of the Alps; will you not go in and communicate all this to her? Do, now, Walter; I cannot say it myself—I cannot indeed!"

"But Miss Leeson scarcely knows me, Robert. She may think it strange that I should thus intrude upon her."

"Oh, no, she wont! Tell her I sent you to look at her drawing; she will be quite flattered. Now, go. No one will disturb you, as aunt and Laura will be out."

As may be supposed, there was no reluctance on the part of the young man to comply with his friend's wishes. Robert had given him the number of his parlour, and finding the door partly opened, he entered with a noiseless step and advanced toward Helen, who stood near the open window gazing upon the landscape, while her unfinished sketch lay on the table near her.

"Oh!" she muttered, "it is too sublime! I never can imitate that. If I could only draw like Walter! If he were only here to guide my inexperienced hand!"

"Here I am, Miss Leeson," he whispered, "at your orders, if you will permit me to be your most humble adviser."

"Oh, Walter! you were there—so near me—and I did not hear you come in!"

"Your brother requested me to meet you here, as you had a sketch to show me," he said, in a formal tone, which, though meant as a joke, sounded disagreeably to the young girl's ear.

"Will you oblige me by shutting that door, Mr. Grey?"

was the answer, while Helen sat down to the table and continued to draw.

Walter obeyed, and then stood, apparently absorbed in thought. The truth was, that he had undertaken a painful mission, and he knew not how to impart the sad intelligence

This Helen was not aware of, and for an instant an iron link seemed to compress her heart. She thought him cold and indifferent; but the memory of all he had endured for her sake recurred to her, and she said, in a mild voice—"Walter!"

The young man turned from the window and looked at her.

"Will you not sit here, near me, and show me how this should be done?"

He took the chair by her side, and looked over the drawing, till she could feel his hair gently touch her cheek.

"This is well, very well done," he said, while he thought, "How shall I tell her?"

"No, no, it is not," said Helen, as she looked up in his face. "Why do you not speak to me, Walter? Have I offended you?"

"Helen, dearest—best!" he exclaimed, as he drew her gently toward him.

"Oh yes, I know I have said or done something which has hurt your feelings," she added; "but can I help being stiff and formal with you when aunt and Robert are present? You are not my husband, then?"

"But I am now," whispered the lover. "You have mistaken me," he added; "I never have known any affection but that I bear you, and it is beyond the reach of caprice or alteration—the very essence of my existence."

"Why, then, did you call me Miss Leeson, just now?"

"Because the door was opened, and that, to strangers, you are Miss Leeson still."

"You are right. Did I not say you were wiser than I am? Only think, we scarcely know each other! I have seen so little of you, and still—"

"And still what, darling?"

"Oh, no matter; you know. But tell me how you thought of coming up to this parlour?"

In the exuberance of his love, the young man had forgotten his promise to Robert. He said, hurriedly—

"Your brother requested me to deliver a message—a sad one—to you. The doctor thinks your cousin quite ill; and his opinion is, that she should go to Italy as soon as possible. Robert wishes you to induce Miss Marsy and the countess to leave Switzerland immediately, without alarming them."

"Is it so, then? Poor Laura!" muttered Helen. "Oh! this is painful, indeed! What! what shall I do without her?" and the tears fell fast as she spoke.

Walter knew too well what acute sorrow was, to attempt to offer useless comfort.

"God is merciful!" she added. "Merciful, indeed! Had this terrible calamity burst upon me two weeks ago, it would have killed me; and now I feel, that, with your love, I could outlive any agony. This will be a dreadful blow for poor Aunt Seraph! Oh! here they are, returning from their drive. I suppose Laura was too much fatigued. Go, Walter, go; it would not do for them to find you here." And they parted as lovers part—so anxious to meet again.

With wonderful shrewdness, Helen managed to convince Miss Marsy and Laura that it was essential they should shorten their stay in Switzerland, in order to remain in Italy as long as they had at first intended. There was

no difficulty in persuading the young countess, who was most anxious to reach Naples, and who had insisted upon prolonging their visit to Interlachen, principally to afford her cousin an opportunity of seeing more of Walter.

Accordingly, the party left for Friburg the next day. From there, they took the diligence to Lausanne, and reached Geneva without accident. At Robert's request, Walter had accompanied them; and, as Laura appeared less complaining, they determined to take a rest of a few days.

Aunt Seraph had become accustomed to the society of Mr. Grey, as she called him. She could not help acknowledging that he was a fine young man—intellectual and agreeable at times; but so very quiet and retiring in his manners; nothing like as fascinating as Gustave de Mornay. She could not imagine what Helen saw in him. "For, Laura," added the old lady, no longer able to confine her remarks to her own mind, "Helen certainly admires Mr. Grey; she likes him exceedingly. Don't you think so?"

"I do, of course; and there is nothing very extraordinary in that, aunt; for Mrs. Murray has been telling Helen wonders about Walter. She knew him before she saw him; and, I believe, the old lady has entertained him about my pretty cousin over and over again. I should not wonder if they made a match, after all."

"Oh, Laura, how ridiculous! He is not at all the man I would suppose Helen would fancy."

"My dear aunt," said the young countess, "did you ever see a girl marry the man you thought she would fancy? Here is a case in point," she added, hastily opening a letter which Robert had just brought her. "Oh! guess, guess, both of you, who is engaged? But where is Elly!"

Helen was summoned.

"Who do you think is going to get married?" exclaimed Laura, as her cousin came in.

"I don't know; but that letter is from Emma Grantly."

"Yes; but do guess, Aunt Seraph—try."

"I never could guess any thing in my life, dear. Here is Mr. Grey; he may know something about it."

"Well, come; I will tell you," said Laura—"Emma herself."

"Indeed!" said Helen; "I am delighted; but who to? Mr. Mac Tavish? He admires her so much!"

"No; Herman Smith!"

"I never would have thought she would have fancied him," said Aunt Seraph, while Laura burst out laughing.

"I told you so, aunty dear. What a sensible girl Emma is! Herman will make a capital husband."

"Yes; but he has not the means to marry. You know he was only a clerk at your father's, Helen," interrupted Miss Marsy.

"Emma tells me that Mr. Grantly has taken Herman into partnership; he entertains the highest opinion of him. Mrs. Grantly is delighted, and they are all pleased, except Mrs. Amanda, who has had two nervous headaches in consequence of her niece's ill-assorted match, as she calls it."

"Poor aunt!" said Helen, with an imperceptible smile.

"She is too ridiculous!" added Robert, laughing. "Now pray, Walter, have you nothing to say? You are, indeed, a very quiet gentleman."

"One thinks the more for talking the less, Robert; and my thoughts are not always worth expressing," he replied, with a sigh which was re-echoed in Helen's heart.

That evening, after writing to her friend to congratulate

her on her happy engagement, Laura addressed a few lines to Madame de Mornay. She had corresponded several times with their amiable Paris friend, but had avoided alluding to their last conversation regarding her son's future prospects. But now she thought herself in duty bound to mention something of the subject which she knew would materially affect Madame de Mornay's plans. She therefore told her that Helen had met Mr. Grey in Switzerland; that she had known him at home, and having travelled together, and seen a great deal of each other, she thought there was a probability of there arising an attachment between them, "which would," added Laura, "impede the success of *our* favourite dream, dear lady." Having thus prepared Madame de Mornay for the coming event, the young countess proceeded with the more difficult task of talking Aunt Seraph into *fancying* Walter; for the old lady, like most very mild persons, had a spice of firmness about her, which could only be conquered by the cunning graces of her bewitching niece. Thus Laura had struggled to obtain for her French friends, and for Gustave in particular, an admission to her aunt's favour; and now that they were endowed with those privileges, she found it equally difficult to infringe upon their rights in Walter's behalf.

"When shall we see you again, Mr. Grey?" said the young countess, as he bid them farewell on the morning of their arrival in Turin.

"Very soon, I hope. I will meet you in Naples in three or four weeks."

"Not later—remember!" added Laura, with an expression of sadness very unusual to her.

Our travellers proceeded to Genoa, spent two days in visiting the city of palaces, and taking the steamboat from there, arrived at Naples about the beginning of September.

Laura had been considerably weakened by their hurried travelling, and several days elapsed before she felt strong enough to call upon the Marquis and Marchioness di Caristi.

The countess, since her marriage, had corresponded very regularly with the only relatives of her husband. She spoke and wrote Italian with remarkable accuracy; and through her affectionate letters Count Arthur's aunt and uncle had learned to appreciate his wife. Their desire to see her had been expressed in the warmest terms of interest.

"My sweet Laura! My own niece!" exclaimed the old marquis and his wife, as they welcomed the young widow to the Villa Caristi—a beautiful residence on the Bay of Naples.

"La Signora Marsy, La Signorina Leeson," added the polite old gentleman, kissing the extended hand of each lady; while the marchioness folded little Arthur in a maternal embrace, and tears of sorrow and joy streamed down her cheeks, as she remarked—

"How much the child resembles his father, my own beloved nephew!"

Laura was much affected, and for a while quite unable to express her gratitude for the heartfelt greeting she received, and Aunt Seraph once more bitterly repented her want of sagacity in not studying foreign languages. Helen understood Italian, and spoke it with moderate fluency.

"Now, my child," said the marchioness, "you must not think of remaining in Naples this hot weather. I have had apartments prepared for you, your aunt, your cousin, and Mr. Leeson, who is travelling with you, I believe."

As usual, Robert had, what he called, *packed out* from

the bore of going to visit the old people. Laura, accordingly, apologized for his absence.

Miss Marsy was most reluctant to receive hospitality from such complete strangers. But they were so pressing, so very kind, that Aunt Seraph could not resist the old marquis's gallantry any more than the fascinations of poor Count Marini, when, some three years before, he claimed the hand of Laura Elliot.

It was, therefore, agreed that little Arty, who at once seemed to assert his rights to the affection of his aged relatives and to the domains of Caristi, should be left as a hostage to insure the return of the ladies in the afternoon.

The marchioness sent her intendant to Naples, to avoid Laura any annoyance of luggage or other domestic arrangements; and at five o'clock the party, including Robert—who had reluctantly consented to accompany his cousin, upon condition that his liberty should be restored to him after dinner, and that he would retain his lodgings at the hotel—arrived at the villa.

"I could not breathe, Laura, in that aristocratic atmosphere," had said the rebellious Robert; "you were born to be a queen, but I am one of the sons of young America."

However, he could not help acknowledging, as he rose from table, and accompanied the ladies on a balcony from which a magnificent view of Naples and its matchless bay could be seen, that, indeed, the establishment was kept in the very best style, and that Laura's relatives were very nice people—so genteel, so polite. "After all," he added, "I don't see why one need be rude and unmannerly because one claims the blessed rights of an American citizen."

"The proof of that, dear coz, is, that there are many among our countrymen full of refinement, and whose man-

ners would grace any court. 'Tis but the young worldling like yourself who thinks that the solid goods of this life cannot be polished by elegance and intellectual pursuits."

"Laura, you are too perfect for this wicked world!"

A violent cough, brought on by exposure to the night air, was the appalling answer.

"Come in, my daughter," said the marchioness, as she wrapped up the young countess in a warm shawl.

The next morning the old lady inquired of Helen whether her cousin had been suffering very long from that violent cold.

Painful as was the task of afflicting the kind friend who had so rejoiced at seeing the wife of her beloved Arthur, Helen felt it her duty to apprise the marchioness of Laura's precarious state of health.

"She must see our physician immediately," was the answer; and a servant was despatched to Naples for Doctor Moriani, one of the medical authorities, and one whose experience the Carlisti family had, unfortunately, had occasion to test.

The Italian Esculapius corroborated the opinion of Doctor Darmont, and that which Doctor Clifford had expressed to Mrs. Leeson before the countess left New York. She might live many months, but a violent cold could at any moment prove fatal. She was in the last stage of consumption.

With a sensation of intense bitterness, the marchioness parted with the physician.

"And has she come to us but to die?" she muttered; "and will she rest with our four children, at the Campo Santo? O, Lord! thy decrees are inscrutable!"

Laura, although every precaution had been taken not to alarm her, was fully aware of her situation, but an extra-

ordinary cheerfulness, an unselfish feeling, which, through all her troubles, had considered no sacrifice too great for the comfort of others, had kept up her spirits. It was only at times that she gave up to despair, and then the outburst of nature's claims was terrific.

One morning, about two weeks after her arrival at the Villa Caristi, the young countess sat near the open window, gazing upon the admirable scenery which spread its autumnal beauties before her. The noble bay, with its girdle of romantic villas, the little islands of Ischia and Nisita, gems of animated mosaics detached from the sapphire of the waters, spoke volumes to the poetical mind of the sufferer. There stood the gigantic Vesuvius, with its smoking crater, like the spirit of darkness watching in envious anger the enchanting spots, resplendent with the bounty of nature and art. And beyond, as though to check the pride of man and silence the cravings of the flaming destroyer, could be seen the cemetery of the Campo Santo, the land of earth's repose, where the tears and joys of this world lay conccaled beneath the flowery beds of the Italian clime.

"O land of my beloved! I have come to thee at last," whispered Laura; "I have left my home, my friends, to lay my drooping head in the grave with thee, my Arthur! Death will be sweet when thy voice calls me to the home my Redeemer has prepared for me! But—but—" added the young mother, as her eye fell on the little fellow who was enjoying his merry gambols with Nina in the gardens of the villa, "must I leave him, leave my boy to others—to their care and caresses? And who will teach him to love thee? Oh, no, no! I cannot, I will not abandon my child!" And a passionate flood of tears burst from the aching bosom.

"Laura, dearest," said Helen, who for a few minutes had been watching the patient—"Laura, what, what is the matter? Are you in pain?"

"Oh! there—there, Helen; my heart is broken! I cannot part with my boy, Helen—I must not die!"

"No, no, my darling," whispered the agitated girl, as her tears fell fast. "God is merciful! He will restore you to us. Laura, Laura," she added, finding that words could not soothe her cousin, "shall I tell Father Bernard to come up? He is walking in the garden with Arty."

"Yes, yes, send him to me; he alone can teach the awful lesson. Oh, my boy!"

Shortly after her husband's death, Laura had become a Catholic, and little Arthur was christened, according to his father's request, a member of his church. Miss Marsy had been considerably annoyed at her niece's conversion, but she was too perfect a Christian to entertain in the slightest degree those sectarian prejudices which have proved such a curse to the whole human flock the Divine Shepherd claims as his own, banishing with their blasting invectives that meek and gentle charity which God in his mercy granted the exiled mortal.

The young countess was extremely pious; and as the subject of controversy was never alluded to between herself and her family, Aunt Seraph could not find fault with a religion from which her adopted child seemed to derive strength and consolation.

Father Bernard was one of those blessed examples of a good priest. Humble and indulgent to others in proportion as he was austere to himself, possessing that essence of charity which seeks the suffering soul to bring relief and point out to the erring sinner the path of truth; ever encouraging to repentance, and urging, as an inducement,

the love, the mercy, of the heavenly Father, rather than his wrath and justice. "Win by mild means, and not by fear," was the motto of the kind old man. Several times he had comforted Laura in her moments of despair; and now again he succeeded in soothing the troubled mind. After he had sat about an hour with the young countess, he rose, adding—"I must finish my game with Arthur, in the garden;" and with a gentle wave of the hand he left the room.

"Have you written to Walter, Helen?" asked Laura, after a few minutes of meditation had elapsed.

"Yes; but I think he will be here before my letter reaches him. I have a presentiment we shall see him very soon."

"I hope so. Oh! here is my favourite organ. Listen, Helen. It plays Casta Diva so beautifully, and reminds me of my days of happiness, when I was at the opera in New York with Arthur. Is it not sweet? and is not this country too perfect?"

"Oh, lovely, beyond description!"

"There, the organ stops," said Laura. "Call to Nina to make it play again." Helen obeyed, and then resumed her seat near her cousin.

The afternoon passed away in a cosy chat about home, in which Aunt Seraph, who, fortunately, had had no knowledge of Laura's violent grief, joined with infinite satisfaction. She so longed to return to America!

Notwithstanding Helen's endeavours to prepare her aunt for the catastrophe which, from one day to the other, might blight all her joys, Miss Marsy seemed unconscious of the terrible truth. She was anxious, as she always had been, about Laura, but entertained no dread of her being taken from her so unexpectedly; and, strange to say, she noticed

not the sad change every hour brought in the frail being she had tended with so much care since her infancy.

As Helen had surmised, Walter arrived in Naples two days after her letter (the first she had written to him) had been despatched. Laura had explained to the marchioness the nature of the young man's claims upon Helen's society. That is, she spoke of the attachment existing between them; and consequently the old lady had extended her hospitality to Walter; and while he shared Robert's lodgings at Naples, he received an invitation to dine every day at the Villa Caristi.

"I am glad you have come in to sit with me, Aunt Seraph," said the countess, about a week after Walter's arrival, "for I have something to tell you which I hope will meet with your approbation."

"I am quite prepared for your disclosure, Laura, and I suppose it is for the best. He seems to be a fine fellow, although—"

"Don't add any 'although' to your opinion, dearest," said Laura. "Helen is perfectly happy, and it is a great comfort for us to see her marry such a noble fellow as Walter. Twice he saved Robert from ruin, and he is devoted to our dear Helen."

"Well, well, I am satisfied."

"Say you are delighted, please."

"Well, I believe I am; for, after all, I much prefer her marrying an American. Robert tells me he has an old wealthy uncle, who will, most likely, leave him all his property; and he is a good business man."

After coming to this happy conclusion, Aunt Seraph determined to be very gracious to her new nephew, and she did her best to atone for her former coldness.

Robert was, of course, enchanted; and as he expressed

his satisfaction to Laura, he added, "Why, why can I not be loved too?"

"You will, Robert, one of these days, when I have gone to the land of rest, to pray that wisdom may be granted to you. There is a noble little heart now beating in New York, which will, I trust, acquit my debt of devotion toward you."

"Oh! I know who you allude to; but that is quite impossible. We are friends, and cannot be any thing else to each other; that is very certain."

"Nothing is certain in this world, Robert, but death!"

And as she spoke, Laura withdrew her handkerchief from her mouth: it was full of blood.

An exclamation of agony escaped the young man's lips!

The lovers were walking in the garden. Walter had just received Helen's letter, which had been sent to him from Berne.

"Oh, give it to me, pray!" she said; "it is not worth reading, indeed."

"Why so, dearest? A simple message from you is valuable to me; how much more precious this first-written expression of your feelings! Let me read it."

"No, no; I cannot."

"How strange," he added, sadly, "that you should refuse to gratify me when it would be so easy!"

The tone of the appeal was irresistible; and, as they entered one of the bowers, Helen opened the letter, which she had taken from Walter at the beginning of this lovers' quarrel, and returned it to him.

An expression of intense pleasure overspread his noble countenance as he perused the epistle; and, as he read the last words, with which, partly in jest and partly in earnest affection, she had closed the letter—"Ever your loving

wife, Helen Grey,"—he caught her in his arms, whispering words which, to us, would be very uninteresting, but which sounded like music to the young girl.

The joys of this world are of short duration. Time, that merciless consumer, grants but few of those heavenly hours to its children.

As the lovers returned to the villa, they met Nina, who was running in great haste toward the little cottage where Father Bernard resided.

"Madame is worse!" she cried, as she passed them.

With a hurried step and a beating heart, Helen proceeded to her cousin's room. An expression of despair burst from her lips as she entered.

Laura lay on the couch near the open window, senseless. Robert was kneeling before her, calling her by every endearing name, while little Arthur, in tears, kissed the cold hand, crying—

"Mother! mother! speak to Arty!—speak to your pet!"

Aunt Seraph had gone out to drive with the marchioness that afternoon.

By the use of some restoratives, Helen and Walter succeeded in reviving the young countess. She opened her eyes, and, pressing her child to her bosom, she said, "Bless you, my boy! Helen, oh love him for my sake. Walter!"

"Here I am, dear lady," was the tremulous answer.

Father Bernard came in. Laura had received the sacrament that morning. She took the old man's hand, saying, "Pray for me, father, that the struggle may not be too great."

The holy man knelt. All followed his example. At that moment, the organ was heard in the garden.

"Send him away," whispered Helen to Walter.

"Oh, no; don't!" muttered Laura. "It is the voice of the angels calling me to heaven! Father, God is merciful! He loves me!" Then raising herself, by a violent effort, she cast a last look upon the glorious scenery. A leaf, blown away by the evening breeze, fell upon her snowy garment. "Ah!" she said, with an indescribable expression of sadness, as she gazed upon the warning nature thus cast toward her, "the leaves are falling—the hour has come! O earth! how beautiful thou art! but far more pure are the joys of heaven! Helen—my boy—aunt, dear aunt—farewell! Arthur, I come!" And, as the setting sun concealed its golden rays beyond the blue horizon, the young countess fell back lifeless, faithful to her only love!

The noise of a carriage was heard in the court; a hurried step on the stairs followed. The door was thrown open, and, with a shriek of horror, Miss Marsy rushed into the room, and fell fainting at Laura's feet.

Let us pause a moment. The mind, the pen, weary fast in describing the tortures of our afflicted nature, for many have drooped beneath the heavy burden, and few can think of such sorrows unmoved.

Aunt Seraph was carried to her apartment, and restored to consciousness and pain. 'Tis when sleep or the privation of our senses has thrown a blank over our existence, and that we awake to the awful reality, that the mind stares in wild bewilderment upon its broken joys. Oh! the anguish is terrific—dark, gloomy, beyond expression!

Thus felt poor Aunt Seraph, as she started from her bed and insisted upon going into her niece's room.

"When you are calm, dearest," said Helen, "then you may see her. Think of little Arthur, aunt; think how merciful God has been, to leave you the darling boy."

"No, no, there is no mercy! there are no compensations to such agony! Oh! I am wearied! I am exhausted!"

When all efforts to soothe the wretched one proved ineffectual, the marchioness, whose grief was expressed in silent tears, requested that Miss Marsy would see her.

"She cannot understand me, but let me see her," she said, to Helen.

Aunt Seraph, whose meek spirit for the first time rebelled against the bitterness of the decree, had refused to receive any one but Helen. However, she could not reject the sympathy of the friend who had given so many proofs of affection and devotion. The marchioness came in and advanced toward the sufferer, who sat the statue of despair, the burning eye unmoistened by a single tear. She took her hand and led her to the window. The waning beams of twilight were still glimmering.

The marchioness pointed to the cemetery, and held up her four fingers with such an expression of sorrow, that it spoke volumes to the aching heart. Aunt Seraph threw herself into the old lady's arms, and a flood of tears brought relief to her intense agony.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Miss Marsy was very reluctant to allow the remains of her niece to be deposited at the cemetery of the Campo Santo; but Laura had expressed her earnest wish on the subject so often, that Helen finally prevailed upon her aunt to make no further objection. Accordingly, two days after the melancholy events which are here described had occurred, all that earth could claim of the young creature who has flitted through this narrative like a spirit of peace and love, was borne to its last home, followed by the old marquis, the disconsolate Robert, and Walter Grey. The funeral service was performed at the chapel by good Father Bernard, and the vault of the Caristi family received within its bosom the pale flower of America. Scarce nineteen summers had dawned upon it! "She sleeps near her lover, and their spirits dwell in heaven!"

There being no longer any object for the travellers to prolong their stay in Italy, all were anxious to return to New York. Gratitude for the kind welcome they had received from Count Arthur's relatives alone induced them to remain one week after Laura's death at the villa.

The marquis and his wife were most anxious to keep little Arty, the child being the sole heir to their estates; but Laura had obtained a solemn promise from her husband that their child should be brought up as an American, and his aunt and uncle, tutored in the school of adversity, consented to part with the little one, who would have proved such a

blessing in their declining age. "You have the best right to him, Helen, or rather Miss Marsy has," said the old lady, as she folded the weeping girl in a maternal embrace. "Farewell! Think of us, sometimes. God bless you, my dear child!"

Aunt Seraph's parting with the marchioness was most affectionate. Since their sympathetic communication on the evening of Laura's death, there seemed to exist a strong link of friendship between the sufferers. "And, then," thought Aunt Seraph, "she is my Laura's, my poor Arthur's, relation."

The travellers took leave of the kind hostess with regret, and embarked at Naples for Marseilles.

As the steamboat wended its way through the bay, Helen stood at the stern, leaning on Walter's arm.

She cast a farewell look of admiration upon the exquisite landscape. There rose the noble city, with its towering spires, like a queen, in the midst of its enchanting environs. These were studded with antique ruins, turreted castles, and smiling villas, among which could be distinguished the Villa Caristi, partially concealed in its gardens and bowers. Long did the young girl gaze upon the spot which the late melancholy events had endeared to her. There, but two weeks ago, she roamed about with the loved one; there the last rays of the bright spirit had beamed upon those to whom she was so dear; and as Helen's eye turned toward the cemetery, she added—"There, amid those cold monuments of the sacred land, the angel rests in death! Oh, Walter! how sad this world is!"

"Yes, but she is happy; hers is a joy without alloy."

"I hope so," she replied, and then went down to the cabin in search of her aunt. Miss Marsy sat in her stateroom, with little Arthur on her lap; and while the child

seemed absorbed in the satisfaction which a new picture-book afforded, the tears fell fast on the golden curls of the orphan boy.

Helen spoke not, but knelt near the mourner, resting her head on her shoulder. This was Laura's favourite caress, and for awhile Miss Marsy sobbed aloud. But gradually, the violence of her sorrow subsided, as the dark cloud sails through the troubled heavens, and gives place to the azure tinge of the clear sky! Aunt Seraph kissed the boy; and pressing her lips on Helen's brow, she muttered—"Yes, God is merciful!"

The party reached Marseilles without accident, and a few days more brought them to Paris. It was with a sad heart that poor Aunt Seraph revisited the great capital, where every thing reminded her more vividly than ever of the immense loss she had met with. Madame de Mornay called on her American friends as soon as she heard of their arrival, but Miss Marsy could not see her. Laura had written to Gustave's mother, to announce Helen's engagement; and when she came in to receive the visitor, Madame de Mornay kissed her affectionately, saying—

"I had hoped that you would have become my daughter, Helen; but, nevertheless, I must congratulate you on your happy choice. Mr. Grey is well calculated, I believe, to insure a woman's happiness. And perhaps," she added, "you would not have been satisfied away from your family."

"I should have considered myself most fortunate to be blessed with such a mother as you, dear madame; but I trust that it is all for the best, and that Providence will grant you and M. de Mornay the blessings you so well deserve."

After this, the conversation ran entirely on Laura, her many perfections—a favorite theme with both ladies.

The viscount called in the evening, and Helen, who had somewhat dreaded the meeting, could not detect the slightest change in his cordial manner.

"What a noble fellow!" she thought. "Oh! if he could only marry Blanche!"

Of course, Helen saw a great deal of Madame de Cerny's daughters, who were attentive, and full of sympathy; and it was with regret that she parted with her friends, with the prospect of never meeting them again.

"When you get married, Blanche," whispered Helen as she watched the change in the young girl's countenance, "you must make us a visit in America; your brother is such an admirer of our country. I shall see him this winter in New York."

"Oh! I shall never marry, Helen—never!"

"Don't say that, dear; such perfections as yours are not doomed to remain unappreciated. I expect to see you one of these days Madame de—"

Blanche's little hand gently impeded the utterance of a name the very mention of which made her heart flutter.

They parted, and the next day the travellers reached Calais.

Helen had seen very little of Walter since they had left Naples. She was entirely devoted to her aunt, and Robert's spirits were so wretched, that his friend felt how essential his society was to the afflicted young man, who, for the first time in his life, seemed to droop under the burden of care which his cousin's death had brought upon him. Robert's neglected education, dissipated habits, and reckless disposition had ill fitted him for the struggles of this world, and when the time came he was untaught, unarmed to wrestle with adversity.

Laura had been his only love, and now, that death

had extinguished the light of his days, all was darkness within. Alas! for those who never have sought the unextinguishable ray which springs from a higher source!

On the evening of their arrival in Calais, our party met in a small private parlour appropriated to their use. After tea, Miss Marsy retired to her room, and Robert went out to smoke. Helen sat on a sofa placed in front of a door which led into an adjoining apartment, but which was closed for the occasion.

Walter, who had been reading the paper, rose and stood near her.

"You look tired, my darling," he whispered; "would it not be better for you to retire? Although," he added, "it is a rare pleasure for me to have your sweet society now. Oh! how I shall enjoy it when you are mine."

At that moment a noise was heard on the other side of the door. Helen, feeling a certain delicacy about thus listening, attempted to rise, but Walter, unwilling to relinquish her company so soon, put his arm around her waist and obliged her to remain. Both were silent for a few moments while the following dialogue was going on:—

"I tell you once for all, that I must be presented to the queen this season. If Lady Gower refuses to do me that favor, I will apply to another of your aristocratic relatives, Sir Archibald."

"Let me go, Walter," whispered Helen. "It is Cora's voice; I cannot hear more."

But still he detained her on the sofa.

"Yes," added the exasperated spouse, "you are the most unkind, unjust man in the universe; and since you have heard of Helen Leeson's engagement with that ridicu-

lous protegé of Mrs. Murray's, you are perfectly insupportable. What a fool I was to trust myself and my hundred thousand dollars to such a man as you are!"

"Oh! would that I had never thought of you, madam! Would that I had left for England when Helen refused to be mine," he added, with emotion.

"So she refused you, did she? You never boasted of that, Sir Archibald. Well, well; she was wise, after all."

"For Heaven's sake let me go," said Helen.

"Yes," answered Walter, with a smile; "for we are in pretty bad company. Poor fellow! he has made a miserable bargain. Only think, Helen," he added, "if you had not been compelled by circumstances to say no, you might have been Lady Courtnay!"

"Do I deserve this?" she said, with more emotion than she wished to betray.

"Forgive me, Elly; for one instant my evil genius whispered that perhaps you regretted Sir Archibald."

"Walter, if you had studied this poor heart," Helen said, with sadness, "you never would have given birth to the thought which sounded so harshly from your lips just now. You would have seen that no love save yours had ever reigned within it."

"I believe it. Oh, do not go—not yet! Say you have forgiven me, darling! Tell me once more that you love me!"

"No, no, sir; you deserve no such favour. I have forgiven you, but I will not say I love you." And she ran out of the room.

Our friends travelled through England without making any stay in London, and arrived in Liverpool the day before the departure of the steamer Atlantic. Their trip across the great ocean was short, and as agreeable as cir-

cumstances would allow. The lovers, after their conversation in the hotel at Calais, had had little opportunity of being together, as both had resumed their duties toward poor Aunt Seraph and the dejected Robert. Once or twice only in the evening they had taken a solitary walk on deck, and then Helen watched the sparkling foam as it emerged in boisterous violence from beneath the great paddles; or she stood at the stern, gazing upon the snowy stream of diamonds which the vessel left in its train.

"Would that the memory of the past could be as pure, as bright as that streak of light!" she said. "Would that our actions could shine with such brilliancy as this, and that no dark spots were visible in the retrospection of our bygone days! Walter, I often think of the immense responsibility Providence places in our hands as free agents. How difficult to follow the inspirations of duty!—how exhausting the struggle!"

"Yes," he replied; "and impossible it would be, were it not for those stars of grace which guide the wanderer through the dark road of life. Happy are those who can see the vision and understand its value!"

The steamer arrived in New York in the first week of November; and, after being welcomed by many friends as they landed, our party proceeded to Staten Island, where Mrs. Leeson and Anna were anxiously expecting them.

Alice Irving was there also, and her cheerfulness greatly contributed to diminish the gloom of the sad meeting.

But many days passed before Aunt Seraph felt able to enjoy the delightful home feeling which she had so often sighed for when abroad; and Robert, incapable of the slightest exertion, gave up to discouragement and despair.

Herman Smith, who was married to our sweet friend Emma Grantly two weeks after the return of the travel-

lers, spoke seriously to the young man, of the necessity of exerting himself for his mother's sake, and kindly offered him a situation as clerk in Mr. Grantly's counting-house.

"Would you have me degrade myself?" was the thoughtless, silly answer.

Herman's friendship stood the test with noble patience.

"I merely offer you, my dear fellow, what I received from your father for many years—what I would still be receiving from another, had not a very undeserved happiness fallen to my lot."

"Yes, yes; you are right. Pardon me, Herman; I am mad sometimes. Yes, I accept the situation; but you will have to be indulgent, for I am a poor hand at business or any thing else. Oh, if I had been a different man, perhaps she might have loved me!"

Happy to have gained his point, Herman succeeded in obtaining from the wayward young man the promise that he would be regular in his attendance at the counting-house; and, after a few weeks, he saw, with infinite satisfaction, that there was a decided change for the better in his friend's spirits.

Not so with Aunt Seraph. The blow had broken the already lacerated heart; but, as usual, her meek and self-sacrificing nature bore the trial with calm resignation; and she found her only comfort in the caresses of the little one, who seemed, as Helen had said, left to soothe the burning sorrow.

"Matilda," said Miss Marsy to her sister, as they sat together, about two weeks after their arrival at Allbreeze, "I hope Helen will be married before long. I see no reason for them to wait. Why should they not be happy at once? This life is so short, and so full of bitterness!"

"I don't know what arrangements Walter has made," replied Mrs. Leeson. "We had better trust entirely to his judgment. What a treasure he is, and how thankful I feel for this new favour of divine Providence!"

"He is, indeed, a gem," said Aunt Seraph, whose devotion to the young man had increased in proportion to the reluctance with which she had at first admitted him to her friendship. Miss Marsy sought the earliest opportunity of speaking to Helen about her marriage.

"Have you fixed upon any time, dear?" she asked.

"Walter was anxious that it should take place immediately, but I thought the spring would be a more proper time."

"You are wrong. My advice is, that you should be married very soon—say, in three weeks. The ceremony must take place here, of course; after which you will enjoy a little trip of a few days; and this winter you can spend in my house in New York, or else out here with your mother and myself."

That afternoon, as the lovers took their walk through the grounds, Walter spoke a great deal of his uncle, who had just returned from Canada.

"You have no idea how anxious he is to see you, Elly," he said; "with Mrs. Leeson's permission, I will bring him down to-morrow."

"I shall be most happy to make your uncle's acquaintance," she replied; "but had he no knowledge of the painful circumstances which made our fathers enemies?"

"I believe not; at least he never knew all; and he has heard so much of your perfections, that he thinks me a lucky fellow, and wonders that I can live six long months deprived of my treasure."

"Walter—" said the young girl; then, blushing, she hesitated.

"What, dearest?"

"Aunt Seraph seems to think we had better not wait until the spring," she added, in a hurried manner, as she turned to pluck a rose—one of the last whose charms had bid defiance to the cold autumnal blast.

We need not pause to express his joy and words of gratitude. It was agreed that they should be married on the tenth of December, and leave the same day for Washington.

"But will it not be very hard for you to come over here every day in winter?" said Helen. "You know our means will not allow us to go to housekeeping until next year, and mother is so happy to keep us with her."

"How can you suppose any sacrifice too great to win such a prize?" he replied.

While the preparations for Helen's wedding were going on at the old place, and Mrs. Boget is in great anxiety about the success of her cakes and jellies, let us take a trip up town in search of our quondam friends and acquaintances. Among the former we can certainly mention Mrs. Murray. She was sitting in the library, reading a note from Mrs. Lecson—an invitation to her daughter's wedding. It was five o'clock.

"At last the dear friend will be happy," she muttered, "and my debt of gratitude acquitted, for *I* certainly contributed to this happy end; though I would have given any thing if George had married Helen. Perhaps it is all for the best. *He* fancies the little Grace, but she is so young!" As Mrs. Murray finished this soliloquy, the bell rang, and her son came in, followed by Walter.

"My dear boy," exclaimed the old lady, "how delighted

I am to see you, although I would not have presumed to ask you to dinner, knowing that so many attractions await you at Allbreeze."

"So I thought," replied George Murray; "but this gentleman invited himself, and, of course, I was enchanted; for I have scarcely had time to ask him what he thinks of that beautiful sex he used to rail against so vehemently last winter."

"Did I, George? Could I have been so rude? I was blind then."

"And now, your eyes are wide open, and you can see the treasure you have won, sly fellow!"

"Ah, my sweet Grace, is that you?" said Mrs. Murray, as the timid girl came in. "I have not caught a glimpse of you since my return to town, and actually had to send for you to come and see me. This poor George was quite gloomy without his playmate. Let me introduce you to Mr. Grey—my son Walter, of whom you have heard me speak."

"Mr. Grey is doubly entitled to my esteem," replied Miss Orland—"as your friend, and for Helen's sake."

"I am most happy to make your acquaintance," answered Walter, bowing; "Miss Leeson has mentioned your name frequently to me."

Dinner was announced, and as the company left the library, the young man whispered to his friend—

"I see something, George, don't you?"

"Perhaps I do," was the reply.

Let us leave the happy party, and, with a noiseless step, enter Grantly Hall, where the proud hostess is entertaining a select party composed of Mrs. Seyton, Miss Elvington, Marvell, and Mac Tavish, all about the same in mind and appearance as when we left them a few months ago.

We need not say that Mrs. Grantly's ambition had suffered two death-blows in the extraordinary matches of her nieces. She had scarcely spoken to Emma after she heard of her engagement with Herman, and consoled herself with the thought that the brilliant Viscount de Mornay would become her nephew. But when that illusion was destroyed, and Helen's choice was announced, Mrs. Amanda gave up to despair, and was loud in her disapprobation of the rash step her niece was about to take. The wise axiom of keeping family difficulties to one's own immediate domestic circle, which Napoleon was wont to recommend to his sisters in their petty quarrels, was one unpractised by the lady of fashion; in fact, she had no domestic circle. Mr. Grantly had long since expressed his aversion for all such discussions, and his resolution not to interfere in matters which he did not consider within his family jurisdiction; consequently, the fine lady's irritation, particularly since her brother's disgraceful failure, (as she termed the calamity,) knew no bounds; and, Mr. Grantly being in Washington, she had invited the above-mentioned guests, we are sorry to say, principally to give vent to her long-suppressed ire against the unfortunate combination of circumstances which had, of late, caused her pride such a severe twinge.

And why was our friend Mac Tavish included in the party? Marvell, although entitled to our esteem, was, we know, compelled by his social duties to mingle with many whom he did not always admire; and an opinion judiciously emitted by the gentleman of fashion had saved more than one tottering reputation. Marvell's, "I think not,' was all-powerful. Even Mrs. Grantly was forced to respect it; for she had a positive interest in sparing the beau, without whom her fêtes never would have acquired their unrivalled reputation in the *beau monde*.

But why was Eric one of that uncharitable set? You have, dear readers, heard of those who are upright, honourable, all that is good and noble, when left to their own inspirations, but, like the reed in the storm, have no strength to bear the evil blast. It bends, but breaks not; and, when the sun has bid the tempest speed far away, the plant raises its feeble head and stands erect once more. Thus it was with the young Scotchman. Having sought, in vain, for a sensible woman, he had given up in despair; and, being fond of ladies' society, he thought himself compelled to put up with the borrowed airs and graces of those whom fate had thrown in his path, too thoughtless to seek others elsewhere. He had thus gradually been drawn into Mrs. Grantly's coterie, much to Emma's regret, who bore the young man a sincere regard and a slight gratitude for the admiration he had expressed in the early part of their acquaintance. But Emma, like our poor Laura, was one of the benignant manœuverers of this world, and she had planned in her own pure mind a little trap for insuring the happiness of her friend Eric. We will allude to this later. Let us return to the dinner-party, where the foaming Heidsick was calling forth volleys of sparkling wit.

"I hear Miss Leeson is to be married next week, Mrs. Grantly," said Mrs. Seyton. "Who is this Mr. Grey?"

"I don't know, indeed. Some one they met abroad, I believe."

"*I* know," interposed Marvell, not pretending to notice the disdainful smile of the lady. "Walter Grey is as fine a fellow as I ever met with anywhere."

"Yes," added Mac Tavish—"a perfect gentleman in every respect."

"And a very handsome man," said Miss Elvington. "I saw him at Maret's yesterday. I suppose he was making some purchases for his lady-love. But surely you must have seen him, Mrs. Grantly?"

"I have not, really. He called here with Helen some time ago. I was out; and I have been to Allbreeze but once this fall. Mr. Grey is not rich, they say—in no business—his family unknown."

"You are mistaken there, my dear madam," said Marvell. "Walter's uncle, Mr. Emerson Grey, is one of our wealthy citizens, not at all fashionable, but perfectly respectable. He is an old bachelor, and passionately fond of his only nephew. Walter has no other relatives."

"Ah! so much the better. I have a perfect horror of a string of parvenu cousins; one never knows what to do with them."

"So Olivia was telling me," interrupted Mrs. Seyton. "It appears Mr. Dobbins's sister, a Mrs. Gruff, with three grown-up daughters, has come to live in New York, and she is perfectly distressed. What will be done with those three Misses Gruff—Betsy, Lizzy, and Eleanor?" Upon which, Mrs. Seyton burst out laughing, and all, except Marvell, joined in her mirth.

"What an imprudent person you are, Mrs. Seyton!" said Harry, very demurely. "How do you know whether Mac Tavish or I do not entertain a tender feeling for one of those ladies?"

"Oh! that would be quite impossible; you could not fancy a girl with such a name."

"Why not? They are sweetly pretty, fresh sixteen, eighteen; that is, the two who might call upon Mrs. Dobbins for protection next winter. But, I dare say, they will be admitted into society without her assistance. Poor

Dobbins! he often looks the picture of despair! Some fair ladies are not agreeable everywhere."

"How can you expect a woman of Olivia's intelligence and education to put up with such a husband as that? She is superior to him in every respect."

"I think not," was the quiet answer.

"Well, well," interposed the hostess; "it appears Mrs. Grey is to receive her friends at Allbreeze."

"You go to the wedding, of course?" asked Julia.

"I suppose so. I am told Mr. Grey has requested that the cards should not be sent out until after the ceremony. Some fanciful notion. What a pity!" added the lady, with a sigh. "You heard, I imagine, that there was a rich viscount in Paris desperately in love with Helen. How much better it would have been had she married him!"

"I think not," again ejaculated Marvell.

"You always think not, Mr. Marvell," said the little widow. "I am afraid you never will marry."

"That is most probable," replied Harry, with a smile; "and a fortunate thing for your sex, dear madam. I should have made a very bad husband—so exacting, so tyrannical!" and noticing that Mrs. Grantly was about to leave the table, the gentleman rushed forward and handed the hostess into the drawing-room.

We leave this interesting party to their own resources, and return to our more congenial friends at Allbreeze.



CHAPTER XXXIV.

It was one of those glorious autumnal days which Nature grants her children before retiring to her long and drowsy rest. The sun shone brightly upon the old place, giving it a peculiarly cheerful appearance, notwithstanding its leafless trees and drooping plants. The chrysanthemums, those last joys of the florist, peered forth in their variegated charms; their sweet perfume mingled with those of the pines and cedars, filling the air with a delightful aroma. The noble bay, studded with a thousand sails,—its blue waters, as they reflected the bright sunbeams, sparkling like myriads of diamonds, presented so much life and animation, that one could not help exclaiming, with the same enthusiasm as the French naturalist—

"O America! thou art indeed the land of promise! From thy veins shall gush life and hope for generations to come!"

So thought our heroine as she gazed upon the admirable landscape, on the morning of her wedding-day; but her mind soon recalled the memory of that distant land of enchantment, scarcely less beautiful, where her beloved friend lay in the cold grave; and a tear fell on the cheek which but a minute before had flushed with patriotic enthusiasm.

"Why so pensive, fair lady?" said Alice Irving, as she stood at Helen's side. "On such a day as this, methinks, naught but smiles should be seen."

"I was dreaming of Laura, Alice."

In one instant the expression of the little Quakeress's countenance changed. This was a theme upon which her sensitive nature was easily affected. No one had mourned more truly and sincerely than Alice, when the sad intelligence of the death of the countess reached her friends in America.

"Oh, Helen! if you allude to that subject, I shall be wretched all day. And, for poor Aunt Seraph's sake, it is essential that we should all make an effort to shake off the gloom which hangs over us."

"Yes, yes; you are right, Alice."

At that moment Anna came in, holding a splendid bouquet. "This was sent over, just now, for you, sister," said the young girl. "I suppose Walter did not think our green-house plants fine enough for his bride."

"Very ridiculous!" replied Helen. "When people are as poor as we are, why squander money on such trifles? It is magnificent! But see here, Anna; you did not read this. I thought Walter could not be so unreasonable," she added, as she detected a card which had been partially concealed among the flowers, and read the name of our friend Mac Tavish. "How kind!" she exclaimed; and for an instant she thought of the influence the young Scotchman had exercised over her fate.

"I always maintained he was a fine fellow," said Alice. "Now, Helen, let me take another look at your presents. Here is your vail, a gift from Emma and Herman; these bracelets, from George Murray and Robert; this silver tea-set, from Mrs. Murray; this diamond pin, from that old uncle of Walter's. What a charming man he is! Really, if I had not given up matrimony, and if I were not somewhat

scrupulous about marring your prospects, I would set my cap for him!"

"Do, Alice; I should be delighted to call you aunty!"

"Well, I'll see about it. Where is Mrs. Grantly's present, Elly?"

"Oh! that immense knicknack?" said Anna. "I cannot understand why, knowing us to be by no means well off, Aunt Grantly did not send you something useful, sister!"

"It probably never occurred to her that *I* could possibly want any thing useful. Those who enjoy every luxury in life, are apt to forget that others are less favoured. And then, you know, aunt does not approve of my match; she has only seen Walter once."

"Ridiculous!" said Alice. "Why, Boget, what have you there?" she added, taking a box from the hands of the worthy seamtress, who stood to see the contents.

"An ermine cape, from Uncle Horace; and what I value still more, a sweet note," said Helen.

"I do declare, that is beautiful! The Grantlys are creeping up in my esteem!" exclaimed Miss Irving.

"And Jackson has just brought in an elegant basket of flowers from Mr. Marvell, Miss Helen; I put it in the front parlour," added Boget.

"Are we going to have showers of goodies?" inquired Alice—"some of your crystal jellies, Mrs. Boget?"

"I never succeeded so well, Miss Alice. You can't imagine any thing so delicious, and my blanc-mange is wonderful," continued the good woman.

"Is Aunt Seraph in her room?" asked Helen.

"Yes, miss."

"I will leave you for a few minutes, girls; I must see aunt a moment." And the young girl proceeded to Miss

Marsy's apartment. In the hall, Helen met her mother. For an instant both were folded in a fond embrace.

"My precious one!" whispered the devoted parent; "are you to be taken from me so soon?"

"Only for a little while, mother. I wish Walter had been willing to remain here until to-morrow; but he says we will not reach New York in time for the cars in the morning. I cannot bear the idea of leaving you to go to a hotel. Well, I suppose it is all right. These little trials prepare us for the great ones of this world. One more kiss, mother dear. I owe aunt a visit before I prepare for the grand ceremony;" and she entered Miss Marsy's room.

Aunt Seraph sat with her back toward the door, so entirely lost in thought that she heard not the light step; and, as Helen glanced over her shoulder, she saw the Bible in her hand. It was opened at the book of Job.

"The Lord gave; the Lord hath taken away," muttered the old lady.

"Blessed be the name of the Lord," added the young girl, as she knelt before the dear friend, and laid her head on her shoulder.

"My fair child, you here, in this atmosphere of gloom, when happiness shines so brightly upon you?"

"Would I not be unworthy of God's bounty, if, in the midst of his blessings, I felt not for those who are in pain? No, no; the Lord grant that I may never know that bitter selfishness which shuns the sufferings of a fellow-being! But, aunt, I came in to tell you of a piece of gallantry which I received from Uncle Horace, and about two flowery homages which were brought just now from Mr. Mac Tavish and Harry Marvell."

"Very thoughtful!" said Miss Marsy. "When adversity has settled down as an inmate of one's household, it



is gratifying to see that it does not keep off all one's former friends. It is always agreeable to me to discover such amiable traits in my brethren of this egotistical world. Is Walter here, darling?"

"No. I have not seen that gentleman since yesterday morning. He left me to attend to some urgent business, and did not expect to be here until this morning at twelve o'clock, just in time for the ceremony. I was inclined to scold, but I never can find words to express my discontent."

"That is most lucky," replied Aunt Seraph, smiling. "Ah! here is my Arty, dressed off in his dismal finery for the wedding."

The child walked in as straight as an arrow, holding up his head, and smiling with conscious pride.

"Arty very fine!" said the little fellow. "Elly not dressed—lazy girl."

"Yes, my pet," she answered, as she placed him on Miss Marsy's lap.

"Oh, I remember something," he said, whispering in his aunt's ear.

"You are right, my boy. I would have forgotten it." Aunt Seraph rose and opened her wardrobe, from which she took a small parcel. "Here it is, Arty," she said.

The delighted child presented it, with a graceful bow, to Helen, saying—

"For my dear Elly."

"Oh, aunt, I cannot accept this!" exclaimed the young girl, as she opened the small package which contained a purse full of gold. "You have already given me my outfit; that was more even than I should have received. No, no; I cannot."

"This is not from me, dearest," said Miss Marsy, with sadness. "Read the contents of this paper outside of the purse."

Helen opened it and read—"From Laura to her sister, on her wedding-day."

Tears of mingled sorrow and joy at the link which still bound the loving hearts gushed from Helen's eyes, and, for a moment, both ladies wept in silence.

"Don't cry, aunty—Elly, don't cry!" said little Arthur. "Nina says my darling mamma is in heaven, and hears and sees Arty, and she is preparing a home for all in God's paradise."

These sweet words of hope from the angel's lips were more soothing than a whole volume of pathetic eloquence.

The breakfast-bell rang.

"Go down, darling," said Miss Marsy; "I will be with you in a few moments. Arty, take Helen's hand;" and, as they left the room, the mourner knelt in prayer. Fervent, ardent it was. She rose, and casting one sad glance toward the broad ocean, she muttered—"Farewell, my child, until to-morrow. Farewell, Laura!" and Aunt Seraph appeared at the breakfast-table with her usual expression of mildness and contentment.

The hours, that morning, flew by so swiftly, that twelve o'clock was striking in the hall before all were in readiness for the great event.

The parlours had been ornamented with flowers by Anna and Alice. The furniture shone with unusual brightness, and the immense wood fires gave the old homestead an air of peculiar comfort, which was felt by all the intimate circle who met that morning to witness Helen's nuptials. We can easily mention them, for they were not many: Mrs. Murray and her son, of course; Mr. and Mrs. Grantly,

the latter arrayed in her gorgeous weeds, (the word is not too powerful for laces, bugles, &c.;) Mr. and Mrs. Henry Grantly; Emma and her husband; the Irvings and Mrs. Walker; and last, but not least, old Doctor Clifford and Mr. Emerson Grey.

Helen was finishing her toilet, a plain silk dress with flounces, the rich lace vail, and a simple wreath of orange-blossoms—not one jewel. But what ornament could have increased her beauty, as, with downcast eyes, she entered the drawing-room, leaning on her brother's arm? An exclamation of admiration greeted the entrance of the bride. The minister stood in readiness, and once more the sacred words—"Helen, will you take Walter to be your wedded husband?" sounded in the young girl's ear. All the events of the past months recurred to her memory. It seemed like a dream; but how delightful the sensation, as the reality burst upon her mind, and she turned to receive the congratulations of the friends who had given so many proofs of true affection!

Let us not tarry to describe the slight occurrences of the day—the cosy chat which all enjoyed after the ceremony, the walk through the park, &c.; and when, at two o'clock, Jackson, who had ornamented his coat with a white satin ribbon in honour of his young mistress's wedding, came forward with a grin and a bow, saying—"Dinner is ready," all were prepared to appreciate the many delicacies which were crowded on that plentiful table, over which Mrs. Boget's genius had presided with unusual anxiety.

At four o'clock Helen left the parlour, and went to change her dress. She was to leave for New York that afternoon, as she had said, much to her annoyance.

It was with a beating heart that our heroine parted

with the dear ones, and bid farewell to the old place, to which, however, she was to return very soon. But the emotions of the day had been many; and as Helen entered the carriage, she buried her head in the cushions, and wept in silence for a few moments.

"Will not my Helen trust her happiness to me?" whispered the young man, as he took the little hand.

"Oh, Walter! I am yours—your property—to be disposed of at your bidding, and that with perfect trust; but I so ardently wished to remain at home for a day or two!"

"Your home is here, my beloved," he said, as he gently drew her toward him.

"A blessed one it is!" she murmured. "No, I will not complain, feeling confident that you have acted wisely in requiring me to leave Allbreeze to-day. You must be right."

"To-morrow I will explain my motive to you," he replied.

"Walter," said Helen, as they were driving up Broadway, "tell me, since our engagement has it never occurred to you, that a girl brought up as I have been would be an extravagant, unreasonable wife? and will you not be astonished if I prove the very pattern of order and economy?"

"I have sometimes thought, with sorrow," he answered, "how inefficient my means would be to afford you that position in society to which you are so well entitled, and which my affection would so eagerly have provided for you. But I have thought, too, judging you by myself, that you could be happy in a modest, humble home, which I hope my exertions will obtain before long. You know uncle has offered me most liberal terms to enter into business with him on the first of January, I being the active partner

in the concern. This is all I could desire; and if you are satisfied, I shall be perfectly happy."

"Satisfied! Oh! how ungrateful I should be to Providence, if I valued not the inestimable gifts which have been bestowed upon me! and how wrong I was to repine in uncontrolled despair at the mysterious combination of circumstances which one year ago made me your wife! I was racing on the path of pride and ambition, my better judgment crushed by the grasping passion; so blind that I hated you, Walter; and still, it could not have been hatred, for I remember the soothing effect the sound of your voice produced upon me on that terrible night. No; I hated the fate which made me yours, but not you. I cannot acknowledge such a feeling," she added, smiling.

"Extremes meet; that accounts for the mystery," he replied. "With me it has been very different. The same ardent devotion has filled my heart since I first beheld your sweet face."

"Are we not going to the Union Hotel, Walter?" asked Helen.

"Yes; but I want you to see Emma's new house first."

"It is almost dark."

"We can see it in a few minutes. I promised Herman to show it to you."

The carriage stopped at a fine house in Twenty-third Street, between Madison and the Fourth Avenues. Walter led his wife up the steps.

"This is a beautiful situation; and how pretty the parlours are!" said Helen, as she walked through the drawing-rooms, which contained, in fact, every thing that could contribute to comfort—all selected with taste. The gas was burning everywhere.

"Now let me take you up stairs," said Walter; "it will only detain us a moment, and you will be fully repaid for the exertion."

Helen followed him; and as she entered the front room, which was furnished with a great deal of elegance, she paused and looked around in tremulous surprise, for over the mantel-piece hung the Madonna and child which had attracted her admiration at Reinsbach, and between the windows, before a pier-glass, stood the same marble pedestal with its coronet of golden grapes.

"Walter, how came these precious relics here? I thought"—then noticing the peculiar smile on her husband's countenance, she added, "Oh, tell me, what does this mean?"

"Merely," he replied, as for an instant he knelt before the trembling girl, "merely that this house and furniture are yours—a gift from my uncle to his niece, and that, as your vassal, I crave the privilege of sharing this modest home with my lady-love."

"This is too much!" she exclaimed, as she threw herself in his arms.

A gentle knock was heard at the door, and, upon Walter's saying, "Walk in," Mrs. Boget made her appearance.

"You here, my own Boget?" said Helen.

"Yes, my dear child. Your mother and I thought it would not do to give you the trouble of housekeeping so soon. Roger settled every thing here yesterday, and I left Allbreeze an hour before you did. We know how to keep a secret, don't we, Mr. Walter?"

"We do, indeed, Boget. I find you are a capital hand at any thing you undertake; but your jellies beat all the dainties I ever tasted."

The old woman bridled up with satisfaction.



"Tea is ready, master," said Roger, appearing at the door.

"We are coming."

"Before we go down, Elly, let me show you how I have distributed our new home," continued Walter, taking his wife's arm. "You must know that your mother, Miss Marsy, and even Anna, were initiated to my secret; and it was with some difficulty that I prevailed upon them to agree to my plans for this winter. I was certain that you would not be happy away from all the dear ones, and I felt that it was wrong to deprive them of your society. There is plenty of room for all here, and, I trust, they will never have reason to regret the arrangement which I have forced upon them. This is your mother's and Anna's room," he added. "This little boudoir I furnished for the sweet child who has quite won my affection: she is an angel!"

Helen spoke not—her heart was too full. The fondest dream of her loving spirit was realized. She had made a solemn promise to Laura to replace her with Aunt Seraph; and now, through the kindness of her husband, the task was made easy; and her sainted mother would thus enjoy the inestimable comforts of a happy home, where nothing would be left undone by her children to obliterate the bitter impressions of the past.

"There is Miss Marsy's apartment," said Walter, as he led Helen to the second story. "I did not furnish it, because she insisted upon doing so herself. This," he added, "is to be a surprise—may it afford her consolation!" and he pointed to the full-length portrait of the young countess, which had been taken in Paris.

Laura, in the delicate sensitiveness of her nature, knowing that death would soon deprive her more than parent of the light which had shed its benignant rays over

the last nineteen years of her life, had been anxious to leave her aunt a souvenir by which the memory of her adopted child would be ever present in her own bright form, divested of that crushing gloom which death leaves in its train. She was taken in a white muslin dress, low in the neck, and short sleeves; her golden curls falling on her shoulders;—the very personification of the Laura Elliot who had captivated the Italian nobleman.

"What a beautiful creature!" whispered Walter, as Helen stood looking at the painting, her eyes clouded with tears.

"Poor Laura! What a sad fate was hers! And so pure—so perfect—so noble-hearted!" sighed the weeping girl.

"Come, darling, come; it is quite late," said her husband, as he gently led her from the sad contemplation.

On the following morning the happy couple started for Philadelphia, and reached Washington that night. They spent a week most agreeably in the capital of our great country, and returned to New York full of joy and hope

Mrs. Leeson and Aunt Seraph insisted upon leaving the young people alone to the complete enjoyment of their honey-moon; and it was only after the Christmas holidays that the family consented to take up their abode in Twenty-third Street. We did not mention that a room had been also prepared for Robert, whose altered life and habits proved a soothing balm to his poor mother in her sorrow.

We need not describe the mingled pain and pleasure which assailed poor Aunt Seraph, as the exquisite vision, bequeathed by Laura's love, burst upon her. She wept and smiled, while little Arty, in the delight of his childish unconsciousness, exclaimed—

"Speak, mamma, speak!" and ran down to Walter and Helen, saying—"Mamma is up-stairs, in my room; she has come back to Arty."

"No, darling!" said Helen, as she folded the little one in her arms; "but we will all go to her one day, I trust."

CHAPTER XXXV.

Our story is drawing to a close, gentle reader. In fact, it would have been concluded in the last chapter, were it not that we feel in duty bound to throw some light upon the fate of two or three of its actors, who have, we trust, afforded you sufficient entertainment to claim your tender interest.

Let us, then, with the privilege granted to all builders of ethereal fabrics, leap over two years, and introduce you once more into the family circle in Twenty-third Street.

It is morning, about ten o'clock. Helen—who, faithful to the promise she made her husband on her wedding-day, has become a thorough housekeeper, an orderly, economical wife—is attending to the many domestic duties which devolve upon an American lady in these days of independent servants. These over, she went up to her room, and was about to make her usual morning calls upon her mother and Aunt Seraph, when the door opened, and Alice Irving came in. "Welcome, dear! How delighted I am to see you!" said Helen.

"I came early, because I have something to tell you, which, I trust, will please you," replied Miss Irving.

"Any thing which interests you, Alice, will certainly produce that effect. But why do you blush so? Shall I," she added, smiling, "spare you the trouble of this great disclosure, and confess that this very morning Robert has acknowledged the whole affair to me?"

"Indeed? Oh! then, I am relieved of an immense responsibility. Did you suspect any thing, Elly?"

"I always suspected your partiality for the poor boy; but it was only a few weeks ago that I, or rather Walter, discovered Robert's attachment for you. And what do your parents say, Alice?"

"They are charmed! Aunt Martha declares Robert is a pattern for all young men. She entirely approves, and I am so happy to become your sister, Helen!"

"Nothing could give me more pleasure. You know Robert has his apartment here, and we are ready to welcome you."

"Oh, no! Aunt Martha says we must go to housekeeping. She has promised to provide all for us."

"Will you see Mrs. Smith?" asked Mrs. Boget, as she entered Helen's room.

"Yes, of course. By-the-by, Boget, where is my daughter?"

"Up stairs with Miss Marsy. She spends her life there, playing with Arty. Poor Miss Seraphina was crying over the baby just now, calling it her little Laura!"

"How thoughtful in you to give your child that sweet name, Helen," observed Alice.

"I knew it would gratify aunt, and to me it is associated with all that is pure and beautiful. Emma, how are you?" she added, kissing her friend.

"Very well—remarkably well. Alice, good-morning. Are we alone, girls?" said our quondam favourite Emma, in her usual merry tone. "I have something most astonishing to announce to you. Contrary to the great poet, *I* say, if you have smiles, prepare to show them now. Let me sit down, first," she added, "for I am really quite overcome."

"You appear to be," said Alice, laughing. "Now, pray hurry, Emma. I am dying to know your secret."

"Yes, for we have an important one to communicate to you," added Helen.

"Indeed? Well, let me hear yours first. After all, it may be the more interesting, although I rather think they are very much of the same nature. I will mention both at once. Alice, you are engaged to Robert Leeson. That blush says yes. Very well; I entirely approve, and wish you joy. Now, the other astounding intelligence is, the engagement of my sister, Julia Smith, with Mr. ——"

"Mac Tavish!" exclaimed Helen. "At last he has found a sensible woman; and she has chosen an excellent fellow!"

"Yes, and all managed by me. Oh! I beat Aunt Grantly completely in the art of manœuvring. You must know that I have always had a tender regard for Mr. Mac Tavish, for private reasons."

"Publicly known," said Alice.

"Well, that may be. There is nothing at all dishonourable about it; all ladies will be admired sometimes. But that is nothing to the matter. Last winter, I tried very hard to have Julia with me for a few months, but her mother was too delicate to spare her. This year, I made arrangements to have both ladies; and as Mr. Eric is a friend of Herman's—one of our regular diners—of course he had many opportunities of appreciating Julia's real worth, which is rendered still more attractive by her sweet manners. In short, the mouse is caught, and so enchanted, it is quite farcical."

"Engagements shower upon us," said Helen. "We have scarcely had time to talk over George Murray's with

little Grace Orland. There, too, there are many happy faces."

"They are to be married in three weeks, are they not?" inquired Alice Irving. "And surely you are going to the wedding, Helen?"

"I don't know, indeed. I have not been out since my marriage, and I really have nothing to wear. In these extravagant days, a whole month's allowance for a woman who dresses moderately well cannot purchase a toilet to compete with the fashionables of our society—a sad state of things!"

"Ah! my little Anna, how are you?" said Emma, as she rose and welcomed the young girl, who, like all sweet spirits hovering here below, wore the same angelic expression which characterized her when first she met us, some three years ago.

"Have your scholars gone, Puss?" asked Helen, as she made room for her sister on the couch. "How many have you now?"

"Ten—very nice ones, too."

"Where do you teach them, Anna? Don't they annoy you a great deal?" inquired Mrs. Smith.

"Boget's room in the basement is mine until twelve o'clock. They give me very little trouble; and as, besides the elementary studies, I require neat sewing, knitting, etc., from my pupils, I believe the morning is profitable to the poor children."

"It is, indeed. And have you many sick to visit now?"

"Some; not as many as in the fall."

"It is always a wonder to me," interrupted Alice, "where Anna finds the means of relieving all her poor."

"God provides mysterious resources for his agents,

Alice," said the sweet girl, smiling. "If you promise not to tell, I will initiate you to one or two of my secret springs of wealth."

"Do."

"Well, Aunt Seraph is an inexhaustible one; and since Helen's marriage, Uncle Emerson, the kind old man we all love, has been the best of friends to my poor. He is always sure to guess when I am short of money."

"Dear child!" said Emma, as she rose; "you are too good for this world."

"*She* calls all the blessings of heaven upon us," said Helen. "What a short visit you are making us, Emma!"

"I left the lovers in close confab, and I am afraid it will be prolonged until dinner-time, if my superior wisdom does not reappear on the premises. Farewell, ladies! I will come soon again. A cozy chat with you is such a treat! I forgot to tell you that I had enjoyed a rare pleasure last week. Professor Amory dined with us. What a genius he is! By-the-by, Helen, do you ever hear from M. de Cerny?"

"I have not, for a long time. He, too, was one in a thousand."

"Let me see," added Emma, "I had something more to tell you; I always stand an hour talking before I go. Did you hear of Mrs. Seyton's dismay when George Murray's engagement was announced to her? She is trying it now for old Dalton, who, from all accounts, will be carried off in his next attack of gout. And it is said that Julia Elvington has become religious. Now that is all, girls; I must go. Oh! I forgot Anna was present: she will call me uncharitable. Don't, dear: I am not, indeed —only fond of a joke now and then. Farewell!"

Two weeks after this meeting of the old friends, Helen sat one afternoon expecting her husband's return from his business.

The little one, whose coming had been welcomed with so much joy in the family, played on the mother's lap; and the affectionate gaze which beamed upon the cherub added a new charm to the many our fancy has bestowed upon our heroine.

"Ah! there is some one who loves my blessing!" she exclaimed, as Walter came in. The first look, the first caress was for the child; then giving it to Sophie, (whose attachment for her young mistress had been proof against all the reverses the family had met with, and who had entreated for the privilege of nursing little Laura,) the young man sat near his wife, and handed her two letters, saying—

"News from your French and Italian friends, Helen. May I take a nap while you peruse these epistles?"

"Yes; but I won't promise not to wake you. One moment, Walter. Here is a letter from the marchioness, so sad—so sweet! Dear old lady! I wish she could come over to us. Oh, this is from Madame de Mornay. Only think, Blanche de Cerney is married to Gustave! I don't know when I have heard any thing so agreeable."

"Monsieur de Mornay was a great admirer of yours, was he not?" asked Walter, with an arch expression.

"A friend, and perhaps an admirer; but his heart was Blanche's long before he knew me; that I saw at once."

"Luckily for poor unworthy me, otherwise Mrs. Grantly's dream of your becoming the Viscountess de Mornay would have been realized. I don't wonder; it sounds much more euphoniously than Mrs. Grey."

"Walter! Well no; I will not allow myself to be

annoyed by this little teasing of yours, which, once in six months, casts a slight shadow upon the horizon of my happiness."

"Does it produce that effect, my own?" he said, kissing the lovely head which rested on his shoulder.

"Then away with it, forever! I would not, for worlds, give you one moment of pain, my precious one!"

"I thought so," she whispered.

Oh woman, with such weapons, thou art all-powerful! In thy weakness, Heaven has provided thee with irresistible arguments!

"What! five o'clock, you little siren? I shall keep uncle and Marvell waiting," said the fond husband, as he rose and hastily made his toilet.

We have said that the establishment at No. — Twenty-third Street was administered with a great deal of order and economy; we should have added, with our friend Marvell, as he rose from table, that Mrs. Grey gave very good dinners, not perhaps as elaborate as those of Grantly Hall, but more wholesome, inasmuch as a kindly feeling, mingled with bursts of intellect, animated the guests, and greatly contributed to the appreciation of the good cheer.

"You don't really say that we shall be deprived of seeing you next week at Mrs. Murray's reception?" said the gentleman of fashion, who, with the elasticity of temper and manners which we have already acknowledged in him, had retained his former stand in the friendship and good opinion of Helen and her husband.

"I am afraid so. You know, I have not yet left off my mourning, and I have lost the habit of going out in the evening so entirely, that it would really be a great exertion."

"Helen," said Aunt Seraph, in her gentle way, "it would give me great pleasure to have you go to this wedding."

"To be sure," added Mr. Emerson Grey. "I never have had the privilege of seeing my pretty niece in a ball-dress, and certainly no one has a better right. Come, come, Mr. Marvell, lend us your eloquence, and we will win the game, and you shall be rewarded by the favour of a dance with this fair lady. I wish I could be her partner."

Marvell, or rather the desire expressed by the kind friends around her, finally prevailed upon the young wife; but still the expense of the dress was a difficulty not easy to surmount. True, Walter had said—

"Now, Elly, pray order a suitable toilet for George's wedding. Not black: let it be handsome, for I, too, will enjoy seeing my treasure in her own sphere as queen of beauty."

But Helen knew her husband's means were limited, and still how could she disappoint him?

That morning a slight cloud hung over her brow, as she reflected upon the possibility of extricating herself from this trifling annoyance, when Anna came in, and, with an expression of satisfaction, she placed a box at her sister's feet, saying—

"This was left for you just now by Emma. She was driving, and could not stop."

The box contained a white moire antique, rich flounces of thread-lace, an exquisite coiffure of white feathers, and a note, with these few words—

"Having bespoken a beautiful performance, it is but fair that I should furnish the means. What better use can I make of what will be yours one day, my dear child? If

the selection does not meet with your approbation, blame Mrs. Smith. Your uncle and friend, E. GREY."

This was Uncle Emerson's style; peculiar, it may appear, but full of genuine kindness it certainly was. So thought Helen, as she exclaimed—

"This is entirely too fine! I cannot accept such an expensive present!"

Scarcely had the words escaped her lips, when little Arthur came running into her room, saying—

"Here is a note for you, Elly."

This time the tears fell fast, as Helen read—

"My darling, if the departed dear ones claim our sorrow and regret, the living are entitled to our smiles and joy. Do not deprive us all of the pleasure of seeing Walter happy and proud of his wife. I enclose $100, which *must* be appropriated to that purpose alone.

"Your ever-attached and grateful AUNT SERAPH."

"How have *I*, unworthy one, deserved so much love?" exclaimed Helen.

"Simply by walking steadily in the path of duty," whispered Anna. "There lies the secret. Did we but understand the sacred truth, how much suffering could be avoided! how much might we not accomplish toward that blessed end all should toil for! Happy are those," added the pious girl, "who, at their last hour, can say, 'Lord, I have done no wonderful deeds—no glorious actions have marked my way, but I have fulfilled, in meek humility, the task thy wisdom allotted to me. Thou canst not refuse the reward promised to the execution of thy will.'"

"Amen," whispered Helen, and for a few moments she remained absorbed in deep meditation. She thought of

at Mrs. Murray's, three years ago, when the

proud, arrogant girl of fashion was called upon to select a fancy dress for the simple, unpretending Grace Orland—a gift from the friend who, with the hand of affection, had raised the young girl to the pinnacle of happiness, wealth, and social position—to a footing of equality with the haughty ones who had spurned the humble Daisy—and now claimed her as her own! Circumstances had changed, fortune had played its capricious game, and Helen was receiving from her devoted relatives the very favour which had made little Grace's heart flutter with joy on the eve of the flower-ball. And was there any bitterness in the acknowledgment of the obligation? No; the salutary lesson of adversity had not been learned in vain; it had purified the immortal spirit, had torn off its garment of worldliness, and arrayed it in robes of charity and love; and, as Anna had said, by the accomplishment of the simple duties which fall unnoticed, unappreciated to the lot of many tortured by doubt and fear, Helen had become worthy of the pure enjoyment granted to the elect. She had tasted the sanctifying draught of humility and gratitude.

The dress was ready for the day of George Murray's wedding; and an exclamation of sincere admiration again welcomed our heroine, not only in the family circle at home, where Uncle Emerson stood transfixed by the beautiful vision, but also in the world of fashion, where she appeared once more as the belle of belles.

"My sweet child," said Mrs. Murray, as she met her young friend, "what a fortunate man Walter has been! My George, too, is blessed; our little Grace is an angel!"

"She is, indeed, dear lady. God has sent the reward your many virtues so richly deserve. What a brilliant reception you have this evening!"

"May I claim the fulfilment of Mr. Grey s promise?" asked Harry Marvell, as he came forward and offered his arm to Helen.

A look from Walter obtained an affirmative answer for the delighted beau, who carried off his fair partner.

Walter did not dance; and, as his eye followed his wife, he thought of the many clouds which had darkened his life before the light of affection had dawned upon it. How much pride and love there was in that intent gaze! and when, late in the evening, they met in the library, and stood in admiration of the little marble group which was connected with the most important epoch in the history of their mysterious attachment, Walter pressed her hand in silence.

"Mr. Mac Tavish," said Helen, as the young Scotchman came toward her, "I have not had an opportunity of congratulating you upon your engagement. You know what a sincere interest I take in your welfare."

"I do, indeed," he replied; "and, I may say, it is my due; for no friend has watched your happiness more closely, dear lady, and has rejoiced more truly at its being so perfect, than poor Eric. But, do answer me one short question. How long have you known this lucky fellow?"

"I became acquainted with Mr. Grey in Switzerland," replied Helen, blushing.

"Indeed! very strange!" said the young man. "Well, I was mistaken for the first time."

"You dine with us to-morrow, Mac Tavish, to meet your lady-love?" said Walter, as they were leaving the ball-room.

"Oh! I shall not forget it. Good-night."

The lovers, for they were lovers still, drove home, if

possible, a shade happier than when they left it. There was a slight tinge of poetry in the tender link which brought them back to the first days of their married life.

"Let me look at you once more, Elly," said the fond husband, as she stood, still attired in the elegant ball-dress, gazing upon the sleeping angel. "Oh! how beautiful thou art, my precious!" he whispered, and again folded her to his heart.

Reader, we now bid you farewell, with grateful thanks for your kind companionship through the regions of fancy.

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